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BLACK

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DIAMOND

WESTERN

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NO. 60



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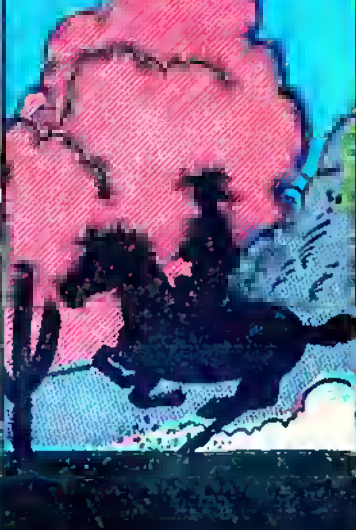
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ACROSS THE ARIZONA PLAINS, HIS HORSE'S HOOF KICKING UP DUST TO HERALD HIS COMING, A RED-SHIRTED RIDER THUNDERED TO A RENDEZVOUS WITH FATE...

A BLACK MASK COVERED THE UPPER PART OF HIS FACE BUT IT COULDN'T HIDE THE GRIM INTENT IN THE EYES OF... **BLACK DIAMOND!**

AND FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, RIDING TO THE SAME DESTINATION, THERE CAME ANOTHER...

GREEN-GARBED AND YELLOW MASKED, DEADLY AND VENEMOUS AS THE NAME HE BORE, THIS WAS THE ARCH FOE OF THE MASKED MARSHAL... **THE SCORPION...**



FOR THIS WAS A RENDEZVOUS THAT WAS DESTINED TO BE EVER SINCE THE PATHS OF THESE TWO CROSSED, ONE A FIGHTER FOR LAW AND ORDER IN THE OLD WEST, AND THE OTHER THE MOST FORMIDABLE OUTLAW THAT EVER RULED WITH A SIX-GUN! NOW THE OIE WAS CAST, THIS WAS THE SHOWDOWN! GONE WERE THEIR SUPPORTERS! THEIR HOLSTERS WERE EMPTY OF GUNS! THIS WAS A CONTEST BETWEEN NOT ONLY TWO MEN... BUT BETWEEN LAW AND ORDER... AND THE VICIOUS RECKLESSNESS OF BANDITRY AND RULE BY TERROR! NOW THEY MET, THESE TWO, AND ALL OF THE WEST SEEMED TO DRAW ITS BREATH AS THEY CAME FACE TO FACE AND...

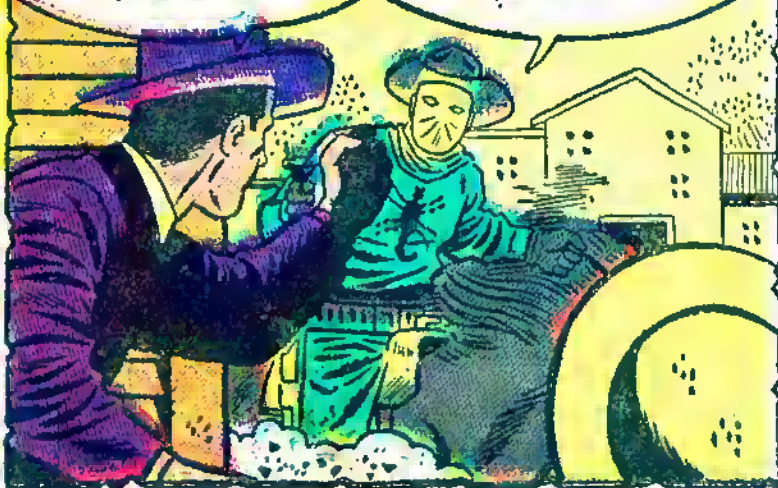
MAN TO MAN



BUT IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THIS CRISIS THAT MEANS LIFE AND DEATH TO BOTH THESE ANTAGONISTS, WE HAVE TO GO BACK IN TIME AND PLACE... TO A STREET IN LOREDO WHEN A RAGING INFERNO BROKE LOOSE AT DAWN A WEEK BEFORE...

STOP 'EM! THEY ROBBED THE BANK AN' SHOT THE CASHIER!

GET OUTTA OUR WAY OR WE'LL BLAST ALL OF YUH!



IT'S THE SCORPION! ISN'T ANYBODY EVER GONNA STOP HIM?

IT'S A CINCH OUR SHERIFF WON'T! HE'S TOO OLD TO DO ANYTHING! COME ON! LET'S GET UP OUR OWN POSSE!



IN A FEW MINUTES THE YELLS OF THE TOWNSMEN AS THEY CHARGED DOWN THE STREET ANNOUNCE THE DETERMINATION OF AN AROUSED PEOPLE TO TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS... AND A TIRED OLD MAN WITH A TIN STAR WATCHES FROM THE WINDOW OF HIS OFFICE, WATCHES WITH WEARY, SAG EYES, HIS MUSCLES CRIPPLED BY AGE AND SICKNESS...

I WISH I COULDA GONE WITH 'EM... LIKE I USED TO!

YOU CAN'T, SHERIFF... EVEN IF YOU WANTED TO. YUH KNOW WHAT YUH'D FIND OUT IF YUH UNMASKED THE SCORPION?



SHERIFF TIM DOLAN TURNS FROM THE WINDOW TO CONFRONT HIS OLD FRIEND, JASPER MAYS, THE TOWN VAGRANT AND THE ONLY MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS HIS PROBLEM...

YEAH, JASPER! LET SOMEBODY ELSE BRING HIM IN! I... I CAN'T DO IT! IT'D KILL ME! BUT WHY DID HE HAVE TO TURN OUT THAT WAY? WHY?

WHO CAN FIGURE, TIM? YUH GOT A BIG PROBLEM ON YORE HANDS... BIG ENOUGH FOR A BIG MAN... BLACK DIAMOND, FER INSTANCE? HE'D KNOW WHAT TO DO!



BLACK DIAMOND? HIM AN' THE SCORPION'S NATURAL ENEMIES? HOW COULD HE HELP OUT?

SUPPOSE YOU LET ME FIGURE THAT OUT, SHERIFF?



TALL AND STALWART, A MASKED MAN STANDS IN THE DOORWAY, HIS KEEN EYES FLASHING FROM ONE MAN TO THE OTHER! THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE AND THEN HE SPEAKS...

YOU MENTIONED MY NAME AND THE SCORPION! WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, GENTS?

IT'S NOTHING, DIAMOND.

IT'S PLENTY! AND IF YUH WONT TELL HIM, I WILL!



BUT ALL CONVERSATION AND EXPLANATIONS ARE CUT DEAD WITH THE SOUND OF HORSEMEN AND SHOUTING OUTSIDE!

SHERIFF! WE WANT TO SEE YOU! GET OUT HERE PRONTO!

IT'S THE POSSE! THEY'RE BACK!



THE FACES OF THE RIDERS ARE GRIM AND FLUSHED AS THEY CONFRONT THE SHERIFF! THERE IS THE LOW RUMBLE OF ANGRY TONES AMONG THE MEN WAITING FOR THEIR LEADER TO SPEAK. THEN BILL BLAKE HOLDS HIS RIGHT HAND HIGH! IN IT HE HOLDS A LIVID SCARLET NECKERCHIEF!

THE SCORPION GOT AWAY, SHERIFF? BUT WE GOT SOMETHING ONE OF HIS MEN DROPPED! THIS IS IT, SHERIFF!... RECOGNIZE IT? WHO DOES IT BELONG TO? ONE MAN IN THE COUNTY WEARS THIS COLOR NECKERCHIEF? JERRY... YOUR SON?



THE SHERIFF'S FACE TURNS PALE UNDER THE BURNT SKIN! HE IS A MAN CAUGHT IN A TRAP FROM WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPE! THEN HE HOLDS HIS HEAD HIGH AS HE REPLIES...

IT AIN'T ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVICT A MAN!

IT'S ENOUGH FOR US! IT'S ENOUGH TO PROVE THAT THE SCORPION IS YORE OWN SON! I'M TAKIN' OVER AS SHERIFF, DOLAN! GIMME YORE STAR!



QUICK AS THE SNAP OF A WHIP, THE MASKED MARSHAL IS AT THE SIDE OF BANKER ROGERS, TAKING THE STAR FROM HIM! EVERYONE FREEZES AT THE INTERFERENCE OF BLACK DIAMOND AND THE AIR GROWS EVEN MORE ELECTRIC WITH TENSION!



THAT'S NO WAY TO FIRE A SHERIFF, ROGERS!

AND THAT'S NO WAY TO ACT, DIAMOND! SOME FOLKS LIABLE TO THINK YORE IN CAHOOTS WITH THE SCORPION, TOO!

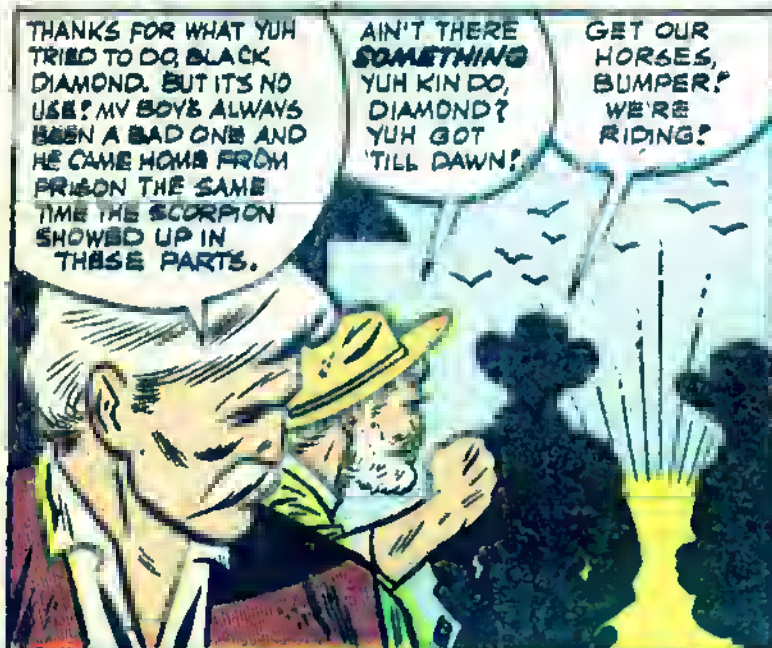
IF YOU THINK YOUNG JERRY'S THE SCORPION, ARREST HIM AND LET HIM BE TRIED BEFORE A JUDGE AND JURY! WHATEVER HAPPENS, HIS DAD'S NOT RESPONSIBLE! TRY ANY FUNNY STUFF AND YOU ALL ANSWER TO ME! ONE BY ONE!

FAIR ENOUGH! BUT WE AIN'T TRUSTIN' DOLAN TO PICK UP HIS OWN SON! WE'LL TRY HIM AND HANG HIM BY DAWN!



ONCE MORE THE POSSE RIDES OFF... TOWARD THE HOME OF THE DOLAN'S... AND AN OLD MAN SEES HIS WHOLE LIFE FALL APART BEFORE HIM...

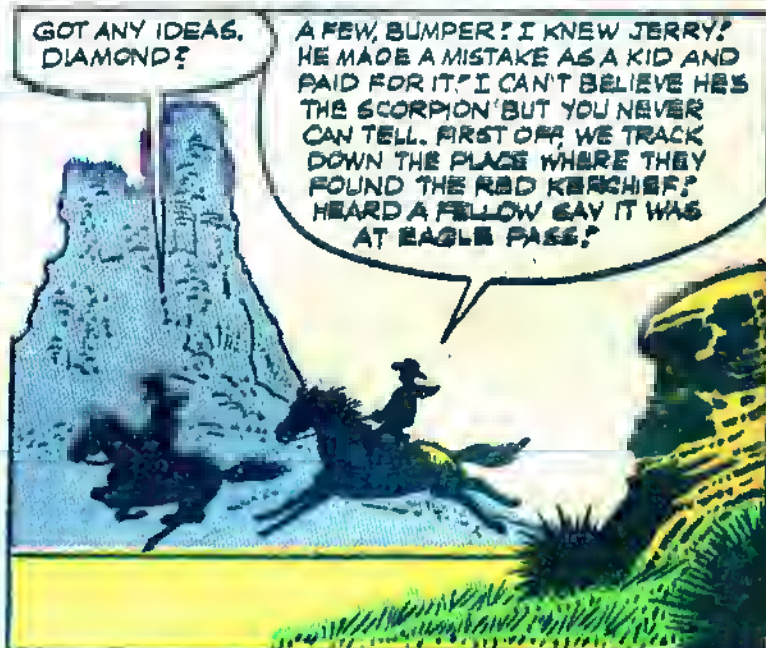
AND ONCE MORE THE TWO GREAT FRIENDS RIDE AS THE CHAMPION OF LAW, ORDER AND JUSTICE SEEKS THE TRUTH TO THE RIDDLE OF THE SCORPION!



THANKS FOR WHAT YUH TRIED TO DO, BLACK DIAMOND. BUT ITS NO USE! MY BOYS ALWAYS BEEN A BAD ONE AND HE CAME HOME FROM PRISON THE SAME TIME THE SCORPION SHOWED UP IN THESE PARTS.

AIN'T THERE SOMETHING YUH KIN DO, DIAMOND? YUH GOT 'TILL DAWN!

GET OUR HORSES, BUMPER! WE'RE RIDING!



GOT ANY IDEAS, DIAMOND?

A FEW, BUMPER! I KNEW JERRY! HE MADE A MISTAKE AS A KID AND PAID FOR IT! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S THE SCORPION! BUT YOU NEVER CAN TELL. FIRST OFF, WE TRACK DOWN THE PLACE WHERE THEY FOUND THE RED KERCHIEF! HEARD A FELLOW SAY IT WAS AT EAGLE PASS!

EAGLE PASS! GATEWAY TO OUTLAW COUNTRY, THE MOUNTAIN HIDEOUT OF GUNMAN AND BANDOITS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WEST... AND HERE BLACK DIAMOND FINDS THE CLUE HE WAS LOOKING FOR...

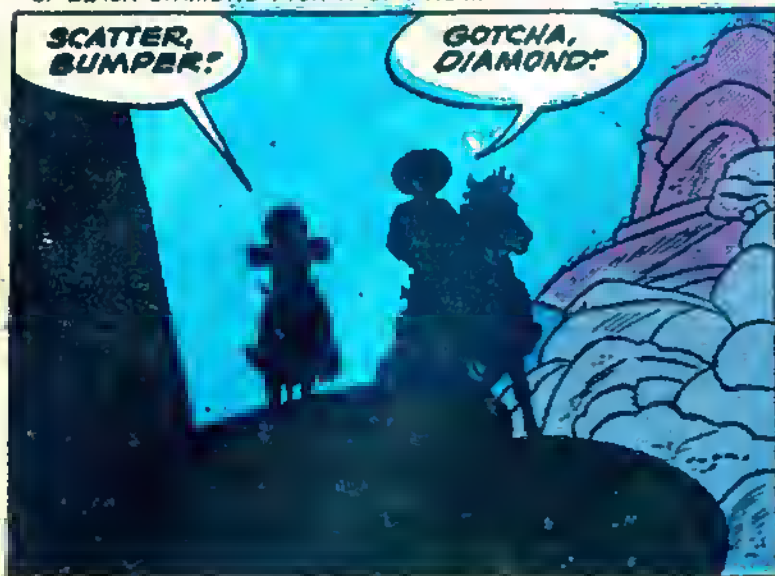


THE TRAIL OF THE SCORPION'S MEN GOES ON PAST THE PASS, BUMPER! WONDER WHY THE POSSE DIDN'T FOLLOW THROUGH?

GUESS THEY FIGURED THEY'D HAVE THEIR MAN BY GETTING JERRY! GOT TO HURRY, PARTNER, WE JUST GOT ALL NIGHT!



THERE IS NO INDICATION OF THE WAITING BUSHWACKERS! UNSUSPECTINGLY THE MASKED MARSHAL AND HIS PARTNER RIDE TOWARD THE AMBUSH... AND INTO THE TRAP OF DEATH! THEN, AN OVER-EAGER HENCHMAN OF THE SCORPION CLICKS BACK THE HAMMER OF HIS GUN! IT IS ONLY A SLIGHT SOUND BUT THE ALERT EARS OF BLACK DIAMOND PICK IT UP AND...



SCATTER, BUMPER!

GOTCHA, DIAMOND!

YOU FOOL! WE HAD 'EM RIGHT IN THE PALM OF OUR HAND AND YUH LET HIM GET AWAY? WE'LL NEVER FIND HIM NOW!

BUT I'LL FIND YOU, SCORPION!

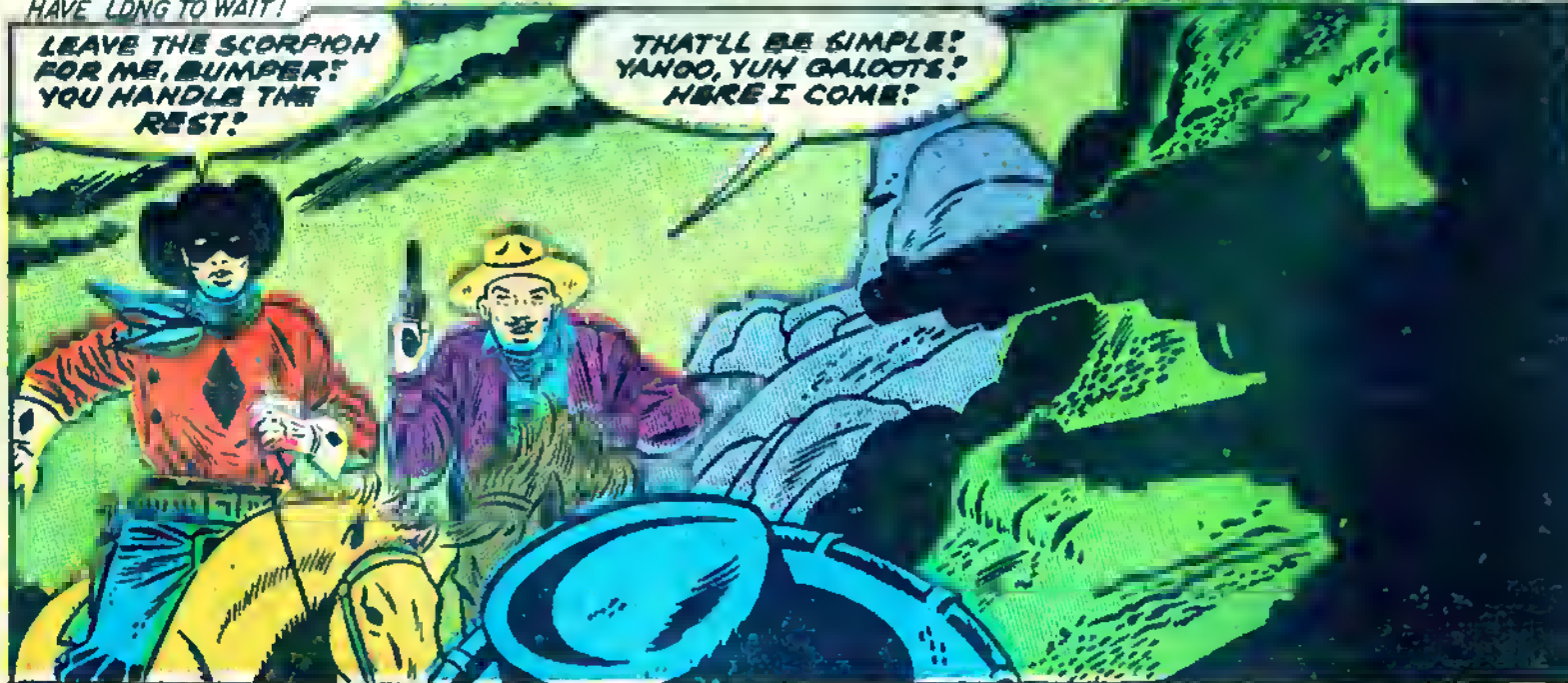


HUH? WHERE IS HE?

HERE?

THEY'LL GET US ALL!

CONFUSED BY THE VARIOUS CRIES FROM BEHIND THE ROCKS, THE GUNMEN DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY TO SHOOT AND MILL ABOUT IN DESPERATION! ONLY THE SCORPION IS COOL, WAITING WITH TWO GUNS COCKED AND READY! AND HE DOESN'T HAVE LONG TO WAIT!



LEAVE THE SCORPION FOR ME, BUMPER! YOU HANDLE THE REST!

THAT'LL BE SIMPLE! YAHOO, YUH GALLOOTS? HERE I COME!

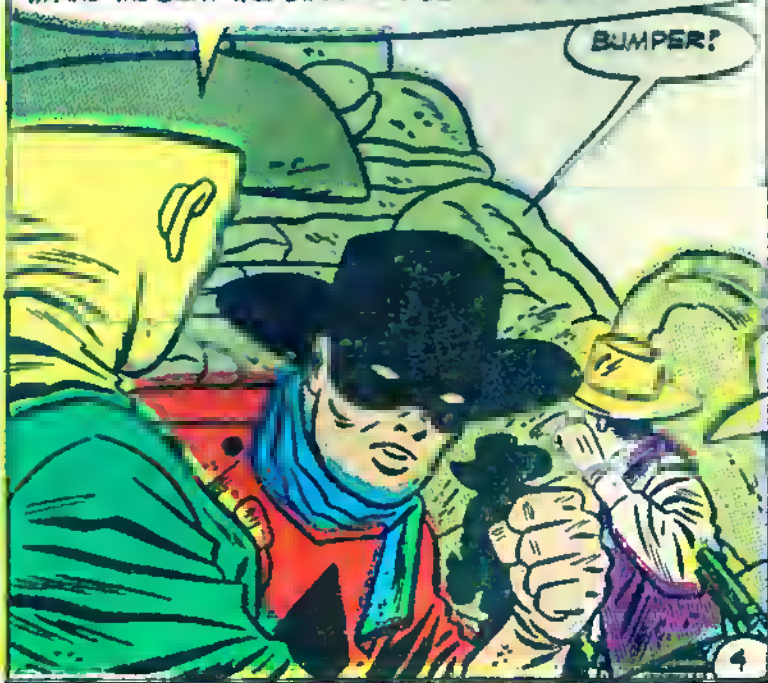
THE CHARGE OF BLACK DIAMOND'S MIGHTY STALLION DISTRACTS THE AIM OF THE DEADLY SCORPION AND THE NEXT MINUTE THE OUTLAW LEADER FINDS HIMSELF OVERPOWERED BY THE MARSHAL!



FUNNY HOW WE KEEP BUMPING INTO EACH OTHER, EH, SCORPION? IT'S A SMALL WORLD!

THAT'S RIGHT! TOO SMALL FOR BOTH OF US! YOU'VE GOT TO GO, BLACK DIAMOND.

LOOK BEHIND YOU! THIS IS ONE TIME THE CARDS ARE STACKED AGAINST YOU! MY BOYS HOLD ALL THE ACES IN THEIR SIX-GUNS... AND WE BEAT THE DIAMOND! LET UP OR YOUR PAL DIES!



BUMPER!

SO A VALIANT TRY FAILS AND THE TWO PARTNERS FIND THEMSELVES THE PRISONERS OF THE MOST CUNNING AND RUTHLESS FOE THEY'VE EVER FACED...

YOU COULDA GOT AWAY DIAMOND, BUT YUH GAVE UP COUNTA ME! IT DON'T DO NO GOOD THISAWAY!

IF WE GO, WE GO THE WAY WE LIVED, BUMPER, ...TOGETHER!

BUT AT LEAST YOU'D BE ALIVE TO CARRY ON! WHAT GOOD DOES THIS DO? WE GOT NO CHANCE TO GET AWAY AT ALL! THE SCORPION'S GOT US GOOD AND PROPER! WE KNOW HE AIN'T JERRY BUT EVEN IF WE DO KNOW, IT'S TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!

I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT THAT, PARTNER! -- LISTEN!!!

YOU SEE THAT, MEN? I'M THE BIGGEST MAN IN THE WEST, BAR NONE! WHEN YUH BEAT BLACK DIAMOND, YUH BEAT THE BEST! SO YUH DIDN'T DO WRONG TAKIN' UP WITH ME!

YOU BET, SCORPION.

THINKS A LOT OF HIMSELF DOESN'T HE?



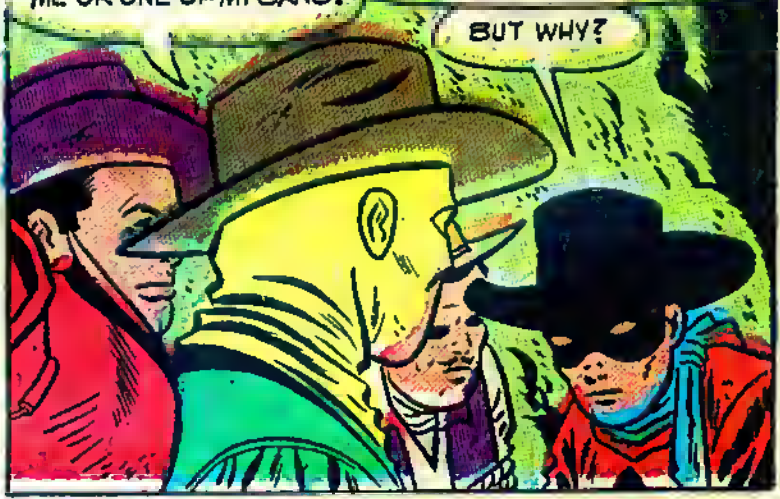
YUP! AN' SO DO HIS MEN! THAT'S HOW THEM THERE OUTLAWS ARE! THEY'LL FOLLOW ANY MAN THAT PROVES HE'S TOUGHER AN' GOT MORE RAW NERVE THAN ANYBODY ELSE! FINALLY GETTIN' YOU -- PROVES HE'S THE TOUGHEST!

AND THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA! HEY, SCORPION! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU AND YOUR MEN!

THE SCORPION AND HIS MEN STAND BEFORE THE BOUND LAW-MEN! THERE IS ABOUT HIS VERY SWAGGER AND MANNER THE AIR OF THE CONQUEROR... OF THE MAN WHO CAN'T BE STOPPED ...AND HIS MEN LOOK AT HIM IN SHEER ADMIRATION!

I'LL DO THE TALKING DIAMOND! GUESS YUH WANT TO KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT! WELL, BEFORE YOU DIE, I'LL TELL YOU... BUT IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD! JERRY DOLAN WAS FRAMED TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HE WAS EITHER ME OR ONE OF MY GANG!

BUT WHY?



SOMEBODY IN TOWN WANTS HIS OLO MAN OUT OF THE WAY! HE WANTS TO BE SHERIFF SO THAT HIM AND ME CAN RUN THIS TOWN OUR WAY! THEY AIN'T GONNA KEEP A SHERIFF WHOSE SON'S GONNA BE HANGED AS A KILLER OUTLAW! SATISFIED?

NOT QUITE! WHO IS IT YOU'RE WORKING WITH?

I AIN'T GOIN' THAT FAR, DIAMOND! BESIDES, IT'S TIME FOR YOU AND YORE PARTNER TO LEAVE US! GOT ANY LAST WORDS?

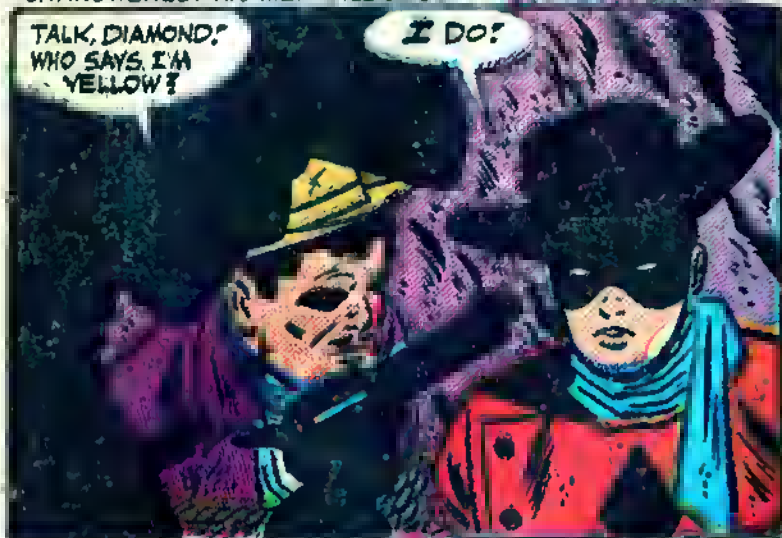
YES, JUST THIS, SCORPION!!!

YOU BUILD YOURSELF UP TO YOUR GANG AS A BRAVE MAN, BUT I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU ARE... YOU'RE THE YELLOWEST COYOTE WEST O' THE PECOS AND I CAN PROVE IT!



THE SCORPION'S MEN STARE IN SHOCK! BLACK DIAMOND NEVER SPOKE IDLE WORDS AND THEY KNOW IT! NOW THEY WAIT TENSELY FOR THE SCORPION'S REPLY TO THE CHALLENGE!

BLACK DIAMOND REALIZES HE HAS HIT HOME! THE AIR CRACKLES WITH SILENT SUSPENSE AS THEY ALL WATCH THE SCORPION TO SEE HOW HE WILL REACT! THE OUTLAW'S TRIGGER FINGER TIGHTEN ON THE GUN! TWO BLASTS AND HE WILL BE RID FOREVER OF HIS GREATEST FOES... BUT HE CAN'T PULL THE TRIGGER NOW! NOT WITH THIS DEFIANCE HURLED AT HIM! HE CANNOT LEAVE THE CHALLENGE UNANSWERED! HIS MEN WILL DOUBT HIM FOREVER! THEN...



YOU ACT TOUGH AND TALK TOUGH TO IMPRESS YOUR GANG... BUT LOOK AT YOU! HERE YOU STAND WITH TWO GUNS READY TO SHOOT DOWN TWO TIED UP AND DEFENSELESS MEN? EVEN AN OUTLAW KNOWS THAT'S NOT FAIR AND SQUARE! WHAT KIND OF BRAVE MAN IS IT THAT DO THAT? LOOK AT YOUR MEN, SCORPION, WOULD THEY FOLLOW A LEADER WHO'S THAT MUCH OF A SIDEWINDER?

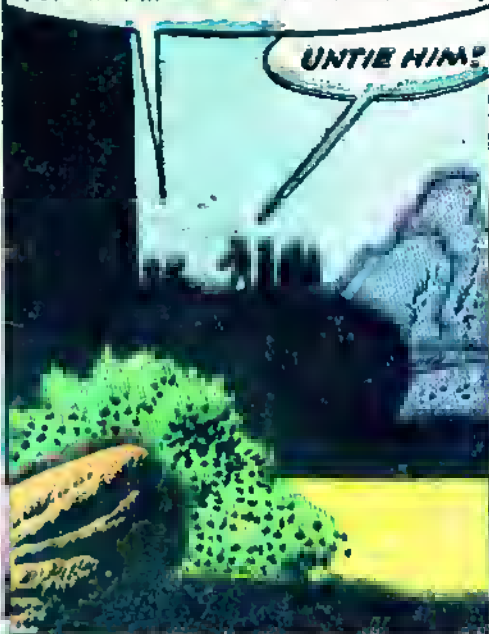


THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO PROVE YOU'RE NOT YELLOW... THAT YOU'RE MAN ENOUGH TO BE THEIR LEADER!

NAME IT AND I'LL DO IT!



FIGHT ME MAN TO MAN! NO GUNS! NO ONE TO HELP YOU OR ME! JUST US TWO, SCORPION! ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH FOR THAT... OR ARE YOU TOO SCARED?



BUT THE SECOND HE'S UNTIED, IT IS BLACK DIAMOND HIMSELF WHO TURNS TRICKY...



HIS MOVEMENTS ARE A BLUR SO FAST THE EYE CANNOT FOLLOW! IN AN INSTANT HE'S GRABBED TWO GUNS FROM THE DAZED OUTLAWS AND PLACED HIMSELF BETWEEN THEM AND THE OTHERS!

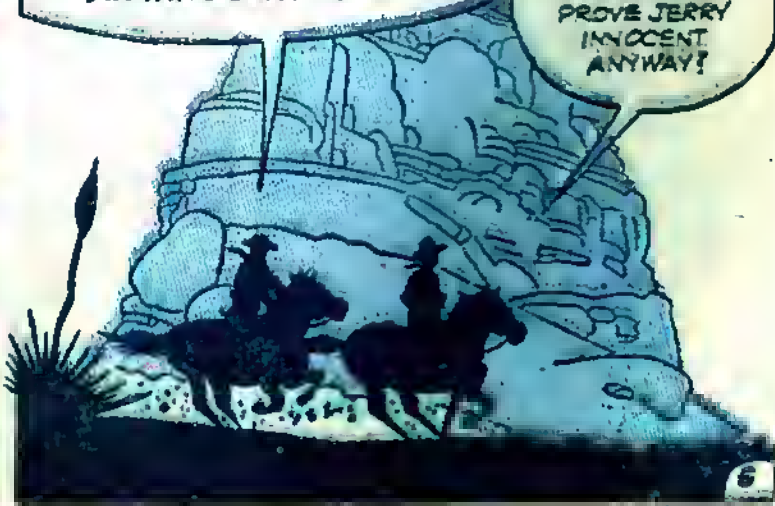
DROP 'EM AND UNTIE MY PARTNER! MY CHALLENGE STILL GOES, SCORPION AND I'LL MEET YOU AT EAGLE PASS IN AN HOUR! ALONE AND UNARMED! MAN TO MAN! FAIL TO SHOW UP THAT WAY AND YOUR GANG'LL FINISH YOU OFF THEMSELVES! BUT FIRST I'VE GOT ANOTHER JOB TO DO!



IN MINUTES BLACK DIAMOND AND BUMPER ARE HEADED FOR THE COURTHOUSE AND THE GALLOWS BEHIND IT WHERE THEY KNOW THE EXECUTION OF YOUNG JERRY DOLAN IS TO TAKE PLACE AT DAWN! WITH THUNDERING HOOFES THEY RACE THE SUN... AND AN UNJUST DEATH!

RIDE HARD, BUMPER! IF WE DON'T GET THERE IN TIME ALL WILL BE WASTED... INCLUDING AN INNOCENT LIFE!

BUT I STILL DON'T SAVVY, DIAMOND. HOW YUH GONNA PROVE JERRY INNOCENT ANYWAY?





HOLD IT BOYS! YOU'RE HANGING THE WRONG MAN!

BLACK DIAMOND! YUH TRYIN' TO HOLD UP JUSTICE?



LET'S HEAR WHAT HE'S GOT TO SAY!

THANKS BILL! GENTS, WHEN THE SCORPION ROBBED THE BANK, HOW COME HE DIDN'T SHOOT BANKER ROGERS?

HUH?



YEAH, ROGERS! HOW COME? YOU WERE RIGHT IN THEIR LINE OF FIRE AND YUH RAN RIGHT AFTER 'EM!

RIGHT! AND WHO FOUND THE RED 'VEEHEE'?

ROGERS! WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?



AND WHAT DECENT, LAW ABIDING CITIZEN RIPPED THE TIN STAR FROM OOLAN'S CHEST! AND WHO RUSHED THE TRIAL THROUGH SO THERE'D BE NO CHANCE OF ANYTHING COMING UP TO DISPROVE THE CHARGE AGAINST JERRY! IT WAS YOU EVERY TIME, WASN'T IT, ROGERS?!

I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YORE TALKIN' ABOUT! I'M A RESPECTABLE MAN!!!



THAT'S IT, BUSHWHACKER! I RECKONED YOU'D CRACK IF I KEPT AT YOU LONG ENOUGH!

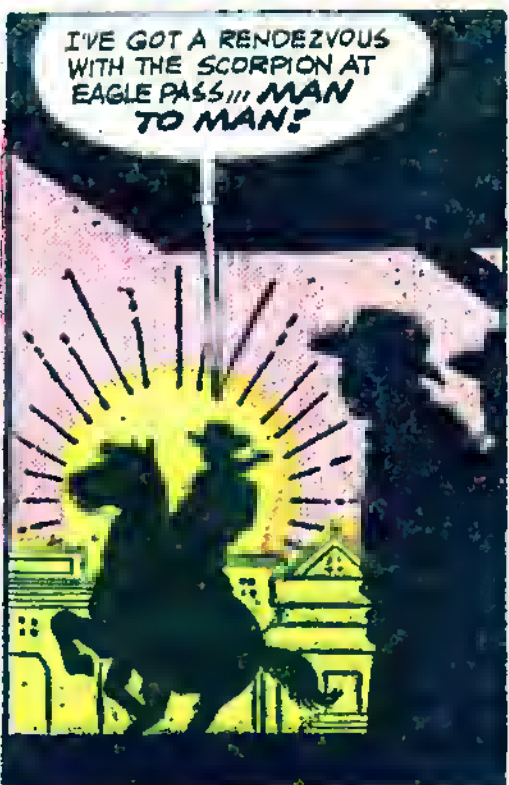
I'LL KILL YUN! DON'T KNOW HOW YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT ALL THIS, BUT I'LL KILL YUN!

HOLD IT ROGERS! I'M STILL SHERIFF HERE AND YORE UNDER ARREST!



TAKE CARE OF HIM, SHERIFF! HE'S IN CAHOOTS WITH THE SCORPION TO GET YOU OUTAS SHERIFF AND TAKE YOUR PLACE!

I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM... BUT WHERE ARE YOU GON'?



I'VE GOT A RENDEZVOUS WITH THE SCORPION AT EAGLE PASS... MAN TO MAN!



AND WHILE BLACK DIAMOND SPEEDS TO EAGLE PASS, THE SCORPION IS SPEEDING THERE FROM THE OTHER DIRECTION...

GOT TO MEET HIM ON HIS TERMS OR MY OWN MEN'LL GET ME... BUT THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY FOR A SCORPION TO FIGHT!

NOW THEY FACE EACH OTHER AT LAST, UNARMED AND WITH BARE FISTS! BOTH MEN ARE SILENT, EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY CONCENTRATED ON THE TASK AHEAD...

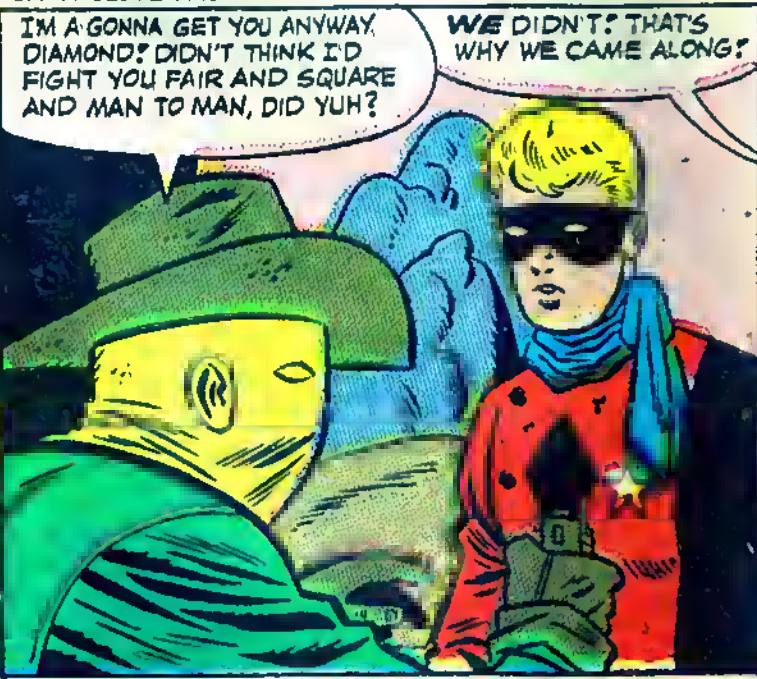
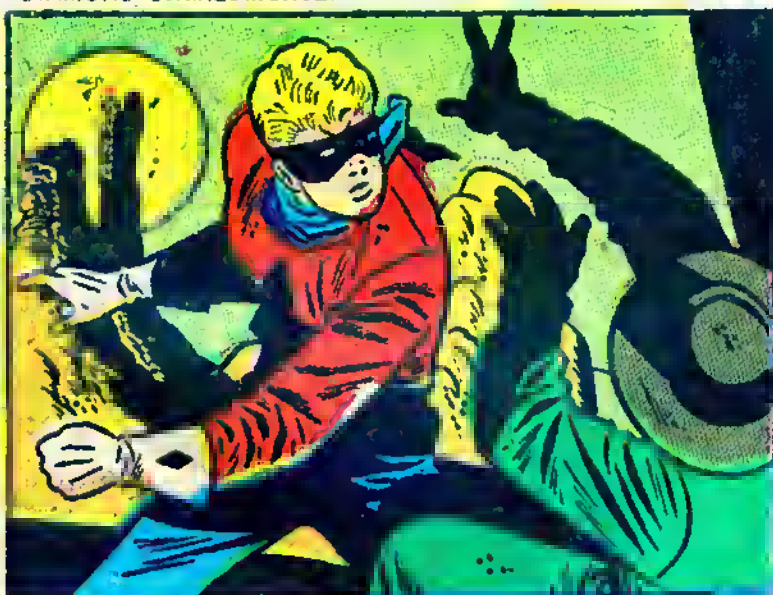
THEN THEY RUSH LIKE TWO BULLS OF THE PAMPAS IN COMBAT! FISTS POUND, LEGS FLY AND BLACK DIAMOND AND THE SCORPION BATTLE FOR THE SUPREMACY OF THE WEST!

THE SCORPION IS DESPERATE! WITHOUT STORING HIS STRENGTH, HE THROWS EVERYTHING INTO THE FIRST CHARGE AND FORCES THE MASKED MARSHAL BACK UNDER SHEER POWER!



BUT BLACK DIAMOND RESISTS THE ONSLAUGHT, DEFENDING HIMSELF WITHOUT STRIKING BACK WHILE HIS ENEMY THROWS PUNCH AFTER PUNCH AT HIM, EACH WEAKER AND WEAKER THAN THE ONE BEFORE! THEN, FOR ONE BRIEF SECOND, THE OUTLAW, EXHAUSTED, HESITATES! IT IS THEN THAT BLACK DIAMOND STRIKES... ONCE!

HE REELS, STAGGERS AND FALLS! AND WHILE BLACK DIAMOND WAITS FOR HIM TO RISE TO HIS FEET, THE SCORPION RIPS OFF A GLOVE AND...



I'M A-GONNA GET YOU ANYWAY, DIAMOND! DIDN'T THINK I'D FIGHT YOU FAIR AND SQUARE AND MAN TO MAN, DID YUH?

WE DIDN'T! THAT'S WHY WE CAME ALONG!

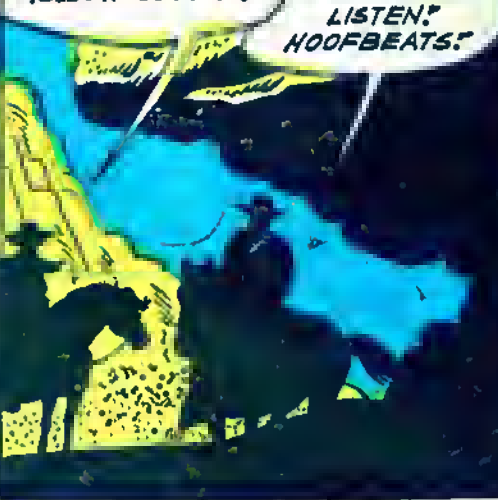


HUH? HIGHTAIL IT OUTTA HERE, DIAMOND! YUH PROVED HE WAS YELLAH! WE'LL TAKE CARE O' HIM!

SO ANOTHER INCIDENT ENDS IN THE SAGA OF BLACK DIAMOND, THE MASKED MARSHAL OF THE WEST, BUT HE KNOWS THAT ALL OF THE STORY HASN'T ENDED YET...

AND THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, BUMPER! HIS OWN MEN TURNED AGAINST HIM! EVEN THEY COULDN'T FOLLOW A YELLOW COYOTE!

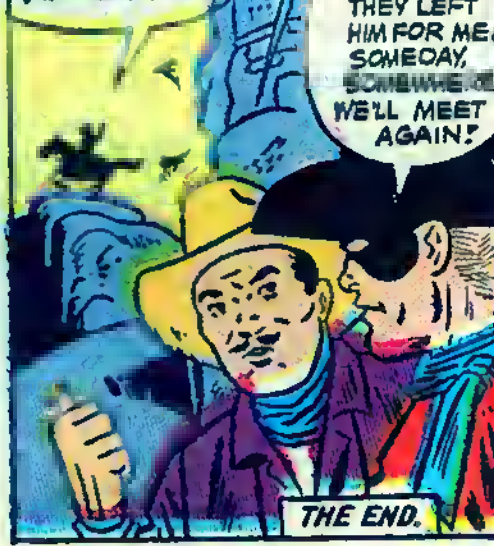
LISTEN! HOOFBEATS!



BLACK DIAMOND! LISTEN! I'M STILL ALIVE! I GOT AWAY FROM THOSE RATS AND I'M GETTING ANOTHER GANG AND COMIN' AFTER YUH!

IT'S THE SCORPION! BUT WHY YUH GRINNIN'?

I'M GLAD HE'S ALIVE! I'M GLAD THEY LEFT HIM FOR ME. SOMEDAY, SOMEWHERE, WE'LL MEET AGAIN!



THE END.

THE WESTERN AIR HANGS HEAVY AND COLD! THE VAST REACHES OF THE THOUSAND-ACRE CIRCLE-STAR RANCH ARE COVERED WITH THE DEADLY WHITE BLANKET OF WINTER SNOW! THE WIND IS BITTER AND BITING AS THE TEMPERATURE PLUNGES TO THIRTY DEGREES BELOW FREEZING! IT SEEMS THAT NO LIVING THING CAN ENDURE AGAINST THE TORTUROUS COLD BUT A DOZEN HEAD OF STEER HUDDLE TOGETHER FOR PROTECTION, STRAYED FROM THE MAIN HERD. NOW THE LEADER LIFTS HIS HEAD AS OVER THE RIDGE COMES A BAND OF HORSEMEN LED BY A HOODED RIDER! THE STEER SHAKE OFF THE BONDS OF FROZEN MUSCLE AND IN DESPERATION SEEK TO ESCAPE THE STAMPEDE THAT IS HEADING FOR THEM AND A GRIM EPISODE OF OUTLAWRY AND BLAZING SIX-GUNS BEGINS...



BOB
GLOBERMAN

SWIFT HOOF DENT THE SNOW! A LASSO LOOPS THROUGH THE TANGY AIR...



THE LEADER IS BROUGHT UP SHORT, THE ROPE TAUT, AND CRASHES TO THE GROUND!



INSTANTLY, RIDERS ARE BESIDE IT, RED-HOT IRONS READY WHILE THE STEER IS MADE HELPLESS!



A THIN SLITHER OF SMOKE, THE SHARP ODOR OF SINGED FLESH AND FUR...AND THE DEED IS DONE!



THE CATTLE OF THE CIRCLE-STAR HERD ARE NOW BRANDED WITH THE MARK OF THE DESPERADO! THIS IS THE SIGN OF THE DECLARATION OF OUTLAW WAR! THIS IS...

The BRAND of the SCORPION!

NICE GOIN', SCORPION!
THAT OUGHTA MAKE
OLD MAN JONAS KNOW
YUH MEAN BUSINESS!

YES/AND
AS SOON
AS HE
GIVES IN,
THE OTHER
RANCHERS'LL
FALL IN
LINE, TOO!



THIS TIME OF YEAR, THE CATTLE ARE
ALL SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WIN-
TER RANGE. IF JONAS AND THE OTH-
ERS DON'T PAY ME OFF, IT'LL BE
EASY FOR US TO SLAUGHTER THEIR
STOCK! AND MY BRAND'LL SHOW
'EM HOW EASY WE CAN GET TO THE
CATTLE! YESSIR, BOYS! IT'LL BE A
MIGHTY EASY DEAL ALL AROUND FOR
US!



THE RIGHT FIST OF THE SCOR-
PION LASHES OUT...

DON'T MENTION THAT NAME
AROUND ME, MULE! I DON'T
WANT TO THINK ABOUT HIM!



I GAVE UP FIGHTING HIM! I COULDN'T GET ANYPLACE
WITH HIM AROUND! THAT'S WHY I LEFT HIS TERRITORY
AND CAME HERE! WE'RE A THOUSAND MILES NORTH
OF HIS STAMPING GROUNDS... AND A THOUSAND MILES
AWAY FROM HIM... SO I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY
MORE TALK ABOUT BLACK DIAMOND! YOU HEAR?



SURE, SCORPION.
I HEAR...

THEN THE RIDERS MOUNT THEIR HORSES AND
LEAVE, HOOF THUDDING HOLDDWLY AGAINST
THE FROZEN SNOW! THEIR DESTINATION NOW IS
THE CIRCLE-STAR RANCH HOUSE TO DELIVER
THEIR ULTIMATUM FOR PROTECTION TRIBUTE!

AND THE SCORPION SITS TALL IN THE SADDLE
WITH PRIDE! AT LAST HE CAN RULE AN OUTLAW
DOMAIN! AT LAST HE CAN RIDE ROUGH-SHOOD OVER
LAW AND ORDER! HIS ENEMY IS A THOUSAND
MILES AWAY!



BUT THE INSTANT THEY TURN
THEIR BACKS AND ARE GONE,
AND ANOTHER RIDER, A LONE ONE,
COMES UP OVER THE RISE IN THE
SNOW...



HE HALTS AND STUDIES THE
TELL-TALE MARKS IN THE SNOW,
SNIFFS THE BURNT ODOR THAT
STILL REMAINS IN THE AIR... AND
THE WHOLE PICTURE IS CLEAR TO
HIM...



THEN A SMILE, COLD AS THE
WINTER AIR, CROSSES THE LEAN
FACE OF... **BLACK DIAMOND!**



NOW THE TIME IS NIGHT! THE RANCH-HOUSE OF THE CIRCLE-STAR IS SHROUDED IN SLEEP! NO HINT OF DANGER TOUCHES THE AIR ABOUT IT... BUT THE SCORPION IS AT WORK, SURROUNDING IT, OVER-COMING THE HANDS ON NIGHT OUTY... AND THEN STORMING INTO THE BEDROOM OF OLD JONAS, SIX-GUNS TRIGGERED AND READY!

THE SCORPION!

THAT'S MY NAME, JONAS! YOU KNOW MY BUSINESS! READY TO ACCEPT MY TERMS, OR DO I KILL OFF YOUR HERD?



NO! PLEASE! I'M AN OLD MAN! I CAN'T FIGHT YOU! I'LL PAY YOU OFF, ONLY PLEASE DON'T HURT MY STOCK! I GOT THE MONEY RIGHT HERE TO PAY YOU!

YOU'RE SMART, JONAS... AND YOU BETTER TELL THE OTHER RANCHERS TO BE AS SMART AS YOU ARE, TOO! NOW HAND OVER THE MONEY!



THE GREENBACKS CHANGE HANDS! THE SCORPION STARTS TO COUNT THE MONEY, HIS EYES BLAZING THROUGH THE SLITTED HOOD IN GREED...

SEVEN HUNDRED, EIGHT HUNDRED...



THEN A GASP ESCAPES HIM AND HE DROPS THE MONEY AS IF IT WERE AFLAME!

AAAAEEEE!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, BOSS?



LOOK! A--A BLACK DIAMOND!

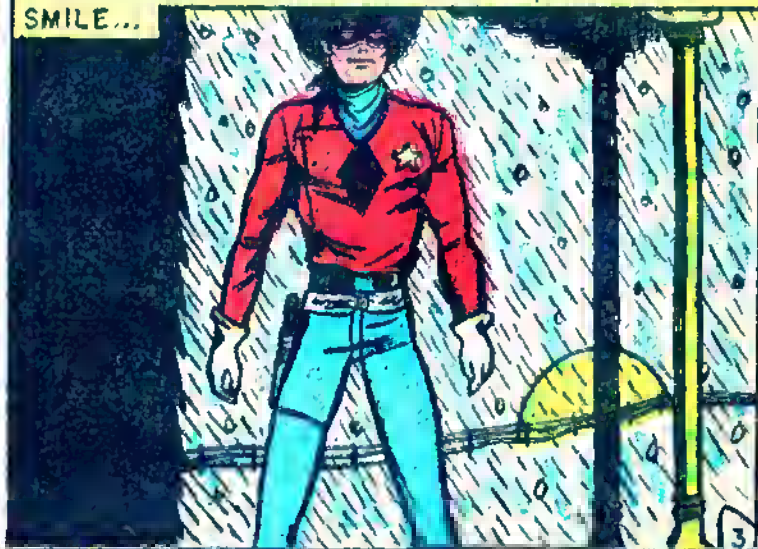


LISTEN, JONAS! YOU CAN'T FOOL ME THIS WAY! YOU KNOW BLACK DIAMOND'S MY WORST ENEMY, AND YOU THINK UP THIS TRICK TO MAKE ME THINK HE WAS IN THESE PARTS! BUT HE'S NOT! SO DON'T TRY ANY MORE FUNNY BUSINESS!

BUT... I DON'T KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE! I SWEAR! I... I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE!



ONCE AGAIN THE SCORPION'S BAND IS OFF AND AWAY TO EXACT TRIBUTE FROM THE OTHER RANCHERS! AND AS THE THUNDER OF HOOFES DIES OFF, A FIGURE DETACHES ITSELF FROM THE SHADOW OF THE BUNKHOUSE... A MASKED FIGURE WHO LOOKS AFTER THE OUTLAWS WITH A GRIM, MENACING SMILE...



DON'T GET SORE, SCORPION... BUT ARE YOU SURE THAT BLACK DIAMOND REALLY ISN'T AROUND? I GOT A FUNNY FEELIN' ABOUT THAT GUY... KEEP THAT UP, AND I'LL GIVE YOU A FUNNIER ONE...



BUT THE SCORPION, ALTHOUGH AFFECTING AN AIR OF BRAVADO, IS GRATEFUL FOR THE HOOD THAT COVERS THE FEAR ON HIS FEATURES... A FEAR INSPIRED BY THE MERE MENTION OF BLACK DIAMOND! MEANWHILE, THE ONE WHO INSPIRES THAT FEAR IS OFF ON A SILENT TREK ACROSS THE DARKENED PLAINS...

I'VE GOT TO STOP AT EVERY RANCH IN THE VALLEY, GET THERE BEFORE THE SCORPION DOES, AND LEAVE MY CALLING CARD!



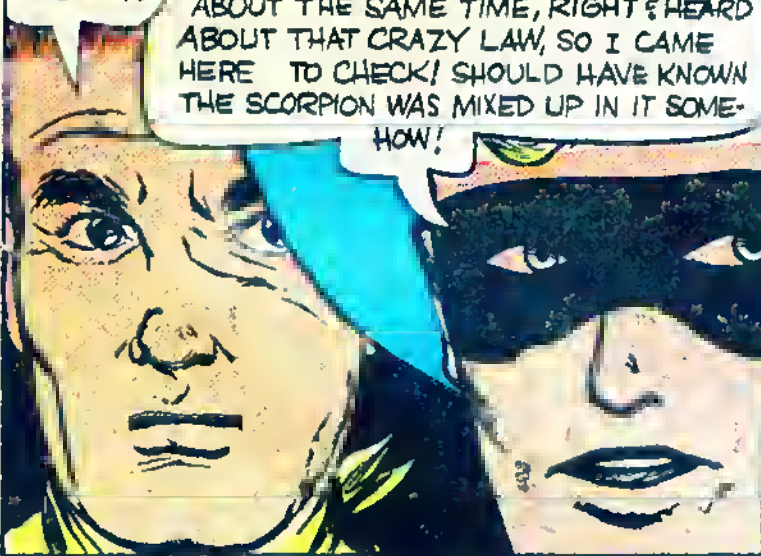
BLACK DIAMOND! GLAD TO SEE YOU IN THESE PARTS! THE SCORPION'S HERE!

I KNOW! THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, PETE! WANT TO HELP ME FIGHT HIM?



FIGHT HIM? HOW WE GONNA FIGHT THE SCORPION AND HIS GANG WITHOUT GUNS? GUNS BEEN OUTLAWED IN THIS TERRITORY SINCE THAT NEW MARSHAL, IAN CARTER, CAME IN! ONLY OUTLAWS CARRY GUNS NOW! EVERYBODY ELSE CHECKS HIS WHEN HE ENTERS THE COUNTY!

I KNOW! AND THE SCORPION CAME IN ABOUT THE SAME TIME, RIGHT? HEARD ABOUT THAT CRAZY LAW, SO I CAME HERE TO CHECK! SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THE SCORPION WAS MIXED UP IN IT SOMEHOW!



DIAMOND! YUH DON'T MEAN THE MARSHAL AND THE SCORPION ARE IN CAHOOTS, DO YUH?

I DON'T KNOW YET, PETE... BUT THERE'S A WAY OF BEATING THE SCORPION WITHOUT GUNS! HERE'S MY CALLING CARDS! GIVE ONE TO EVERY RANCHER, AND WHEN THE SCORPION GETS TO WHA, MAKE SURE HE SEES ONE OF THE CARDS! LEAVE THE REST TO ME!



BLACK DIAMOND HAS ONE MORE STOP TO MAKE... THE OFFICE OF MARSHAL IAN CARTER...

CAME TO CHECK MY GUNS, MARSHAL! BUT FIRST, CAN I SEE A COPY OF THE LAW THAT SAYS I SHOULD?

MY WORD IS THE LAW, MISTER! YUH QUESTION THE WORD OF A MARSHAL? BESIDES, WHAT'RE YUH DOIN' WEARIN' A MASK?



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? I SEE YOU DON'T MIND THE SCORPION WEARIN' A MASK, AND YOU LET HIM AND HIS GANG KEEP THEIR GUNS!

THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN WHO'D KNOW THINGS LIKE THAT... REACH, BLACK DIAMOND!



SURE, RIGHT FOR YOUR CHIN!



A SLIGHT SCUFFLE WHICH DOESN'T LAST TOO LONG, AND THEN A RIDER GALLOPS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MARSHAL, HUDDLED AGAINST THE COLO, COAT COLLAR PULLED UP, HAT BRIM LOW OVER HIS FACE! A FEW MINUTES LATER HE PULLS UP BEFORE THE HOME OF TYLER SPENCE, ANOTHER RANCHER... AND THERE HE RENDEZVOUS WITH...THE SCORPION!



HEY, IT'S THE MARSHAL, SCORPION!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO KNOW WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER!

HAD TO SEE YOU! BLACK DIAMOND'S IN TOWN!

LISTEN, CARTER, YOU MAY BE MY PARTNER IN THIS, BUT YOU TAKE ORDERS FROM ME, UNDERSTAND? I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THAT NAME! AND HE'S NOT IN TOWN, EITHER! YOU MUST HAVE SEEN ONE OF HIS CARDS! THE RANCHERS ARE TRYING TO SCARE ME OFF WITH 'EM, AND I'M NOT GOING TO SCARE! SO GET BACK TO YOUR JOB OF KEEPING THE LAW-ABIDERS UNARMED, AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST!



WELL, I WANT TO BE CLOSE TO YOU... JUST IN CASE! THEY SAY YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN WHO'S NOT AFRAID OF BLACK DIAMOND!

WELL, LET'S GET GOING, THEN...

ALL RIGHT... BUT STAY OUT OF SIGHT! YOU'RE NOT THE REAL MARSHAL... WE GOT HIM HIDDEN IN THE WOODS... WHERE WE PUT HIM WHEN HE WAS RIDING INTO TOWN TO TAKE OVER THE JOB AND YOU TOOK HIS PLACE... BUT I'M STILL NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES! I NEED YOU ON THAT JOB SO I CAN RUN THIS TERRITORY THE WAY I WANT!

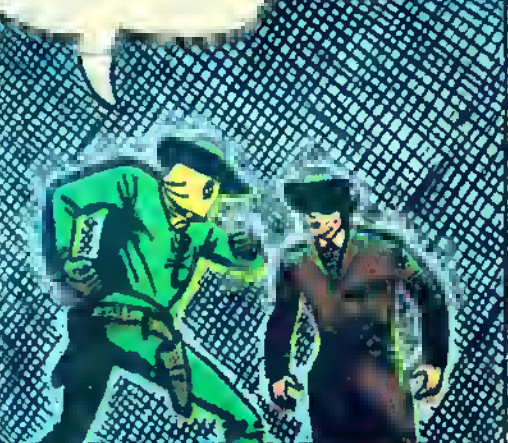


I'M TAKING OVER, SCORPION!

THERE IS A TERRIBLE SILENCE FOR A LONG MOMENT! THE SCORPION STARES INTO THE SHAOOWE FACE IN DISBELIEF AT THIS MUTINY! HIS MEN, TOO, STANO RIGIO WITH SUSPENSE! NEVER HAS ANYONE OAREO CHALLENGE THE SCORPION... EXCEPT THE MAN WHO IS NOW A THOUSAND MILES AWAY... ANO NOW HIS OWN PARTNER TOSSES A DEFIANT THREAT INTO HIS HOODED FACE!



THEN THE SCORPION SNORTS IN DERISION AT THE UPSTART! SLOWLY HE OISMOUNTS... ANO SO DOES THE OTHER ANO THEY FACE EACH OTHER WITH CLENCHED FISTS!



GOT TOO BIG, EH, CARTER? I SEE I GOT TO CUT YOU DOWN TO SIZE! ALL RIGHT, EX-PARDNER! START SWINGIN'!

NO ONE HAS EVER STOOD UP BEFORE THE FIRST FURIOUS ONSLAUGHT OF THE FURY OF THE SCORPION! SURE OF QUICK VICTORY, HE CHARGES... INTO EMPTY SPACE AS HIS FOE SIDESTEPS NIMBLY!



CARTER'LL GET KILLED!

SERVES HIM RIGHT FOR MAKIN' THE BOSS MAD!

HE'S LOCO, THINKIN' HE CAN BEAT THE SCORPION!

ONLY BLACK DIAMOND STANDS A CHANCE TO DO THAT!

CARTER MAKES HIS MOVE AND DOWN GOES THE MIGHTY SCORPION WHILE HIS MEN STARE IN AWE AND DISBELIEF AT THE FALL OF THEIR LEADER BEFORE THE IMPOSTER WITH A MARSHAL'S STAR!



LAND O' GOSHEN!

JUMPIN' SASSAFRASS! HE'S KNOCKED OUT THE SCORPION!

THE SCORPIDN'S FIGURE HUD-
DLES IN THE SNOW IN STUPIFICA-
TION! THEN HE OPENS HIS EYES,
STARES UP AT HIS CONQUEROR...

ONLY BLACK DIAMOND COULD DO
THAT... AND HE AIN'T AROUND HERE...
IS HE? HE'S NOT HERE... IS
HE? IS HE? IS HE?

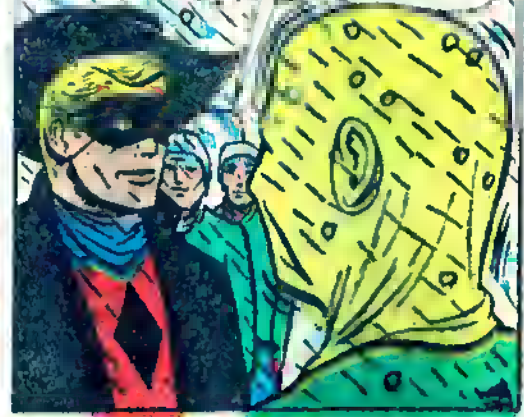


THE OTHER DOESN'T REPLY!
INSTEAD HE STANDS WAITING FOR
THE SCORPION'S NEXT MOVE...
WAITING AND READY...



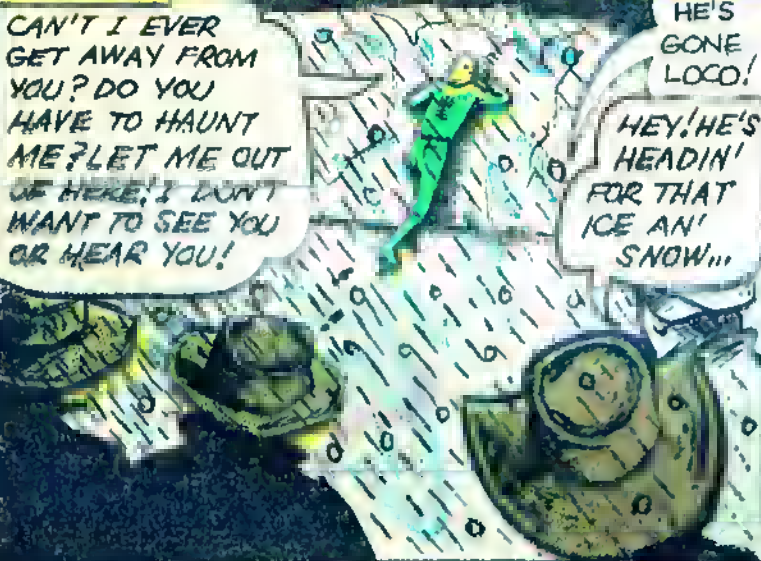
NOW HE RAISES HIS HEAD AND
THE SHADOW LEAVES HIS FACE,
REVEALING THE FEATURES OF...

BLACK DIAMOND! AND YUH
IT IS HIM! SAID HE WAS
A THOUSAND MILES
AWAY! YUH TOLD US
WE DIDN'T HAVE A
THING TO WORRY
ABOUT...



WITH A ROAR OF RAGE AND FRUSTRATION, THE
MADDENED SCORPION, KNOWING THAT HIS MEN HAVE
TURNED AGAINST HIM AND THAT HE IS ALONE IN HIS
BATTLE AGAINST BLACK DIAMOND, TURNS AND
RUSHES OFF, PLOWING THROUGH THE THICK SNOW
DRIFTS...

CAN'T I EVER
GET AWAY FROM
YOU? DO YOU
HAVE TO HAUNT
ME? LET ME OUT
OF HERE! I DON'T
WANT TO SEE YOU
OR HEAR YOU!



HE PLUNGES BLINDLY INTO A WALL OF SNOW... A
WALL THAT COLLAPSES AND PLUNGES DOWN UPON
HIM IN AN AVALANCHE!



WHEW! THAT WAS ROUGH! ANY-
WAY, IT'S ALL OVER! DIAMOND,
WE CAN'T FIGHT YOU! IF YOU'RE
AGAIN US, WE GIVE UP RIGHT
NOW!

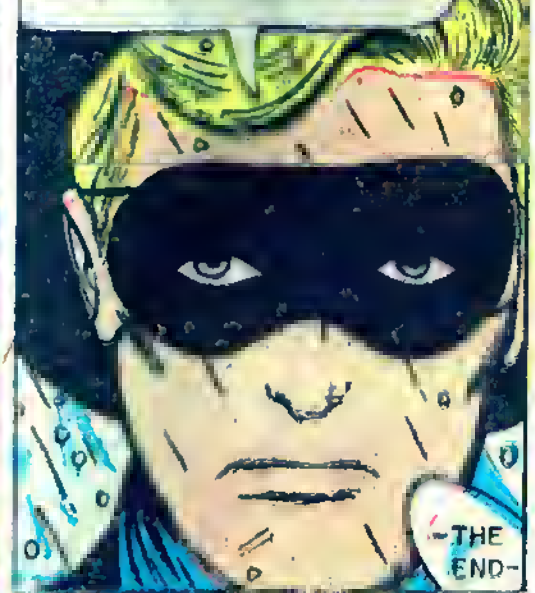


...HOW'D YUH
TRACK DOWN
THE SCORPION?

I WASN'T
TRACKING
HIM DOWN!
I WAS JUST CUR-
IOUS ABOUT A
MARSHAL WHO
TOOK GUNS AWAY
FROM HONEST MEN
IN THIS ROUGH
COUNTRY, AND IT
LED ME RIGHT TO
THE SCORPION!



BUT AS FAR AS IT'S BEING FIN-
ISHED FOR HIM IS CONCERNED,
I DON'T KNOW! A SCORPION CAN
DIE A THOUSAND DEATHS BE-
FORE THE FINAL DEATH!





"SMART SAMMY SMYTHE"

By BRUCE COPELAND

In the early days just a few years after the conclusion of the War between the States, pioneers of all sorts flocked to what is now known as Nevada. Most of these pioneers were on the way to California and many were just looking for a good place to start a new life, build a new home and make money. In those days there was some mining, but it was years before the big gold boom.

It was pretty rough country. Even today, you can ride on hack roads as far as 200 miles without meeting a living soul coming or going. But, in those days of the early stage coach, one could travel for days without seeing a soul.

But, travelers in stage coaches always joggled along on their stuffy coach seats with one hand on their pistol holster and one eye searching the distant plains for a sight of Indians.

Sammy Smythe was known throughout the West as one of the smartest stage coach drivers anywhere. In fact, because he had driven his coach safely through so many Indian ambushes and had such speed over very rough and dangerous roads that he was known as "Smart Sammy Smythe."

Many a time, the Indians had tried to hold up his coach because they knew only the richest people rode with Sammy and because he always carried a lot of gold and silver. Every time, however, Sammy, who was the best rifle shot in the stage coach business and whose eyes could see as far as most people could see with powerful field glasses, had been able to spot the Indians and drive them off. Every time, he brought the coach through safely.

The Indians, and especially Chief Bulltail, spent many hours thinking how they could trap Sammy Smythe, capture the stage coach and grab all the wealth that was being transported at high speed across the desert.

It was on August 2, 1871, that Sammy and his coach were galloping westward from what is now the town of Tonopah. In those days it was a little fort with no more than twenty inhabitants.

Sammy knew that some three hours distant he could stop at Fort Eureka where he could rest and water the horses and perhaps his passengers could buy a drink. Fort Eureka was a very small place, but it did have a large corral because the pasture was good and the people at Fort Eureka had gone into raising horses.

Now, Chief Bulltail had worked out a very clever plan because he was determined to capture Sammy Smythe's stage coach and all his wealth.

As Sammy approached Fort Eureka, he sensed that something was wrong. His passengers, of course, were gay and happy because they welcomed the chance to arrive in a few minutes at the stockade and get out and stretch their legs and enjoy a good meal.

Just outside the fort was a huge corral which contained forty or fifty of the finest horses in the old west. These horses were well fed, groomed and cared for with coats slick and glossy.

As Sammy Smythe came thundering down the hillside, he looked at the corral, which was full of horses, and he KNEW something was very wrong indeed.

He pulled up his horses with a tremendous jerk and jammed on the brakes so hard and so fast that the coach nearly turned over. The passengers were so startled they could hardly ask what was going on. But, Sammy turned the coach around, used a heavy whip on the horses and drove back up the hillside where he had just come from.

His quick thinking saved the lives of all the passengers and saved the shippers all their gold. Now, what do you think made Sammy sense danger? As he approached the corral, he noticed that the horses were thin and mangy and poorly fed and he knew at once that these were Indian ponies. The Indians had no grain to feed their horses and even in this good pasture good Indian ponies got mighty thin during the dry spell. Sammy knew something was wrong when the corral was filled with Indian ponies and he knew that this was a decoy. He also sensed that Chief Bulltail had several days before attacked Fort Eureka and overrun it and killed and captured all the inhabitants. The Indians had immediately seized all the good horses of the settlers and substituted their runt sized Indian ponies in the corral. They never thought that Sammy would notice the difference, but he did and the 200 Indians who had set the trap for him and were lying in wait at Fort Eureka never got their hands on Sammy Smythe's coach.

This is only one of many incidents in which Sammy outwitted the Indians, stage coach bandits and the ravages of nature such as floods, draught and mountain land slides. That is why he was called "Smart Sammy Smythe."

Chief Bulltail kept trying, for several years, to capture the stage coach, but to no avail. Later, when the old west settled down with some semblance of law and order, poor Sammy died in Mrs. Adams' hotel, in Carson City.

Hundreds of people came to the funeral. Many were former passengers of Sammy's stage coach who had gone west and lived to tell the tale, thanks to his smart driving. Others were mining prospectors who had heard of the exploits of Sammy Smythe in the early days.

But, at the funeral was one old man whom nobody recognized. He told people his name was Robert Bulltail. When the services were over and the mourners were filing out of the church, this Robert Bulltail was heard to say, "Sammy Smythe was the smartest stage coach driver who ever crossed Nevada."



The Last Notch

MY NAME'S BIG BILL

LARAMIE, THEY SAY THERE'S ONE CRITTER IN THESE PARTS WHO DON'T LIKE MEN O' MY BREED? -- CALLS HIMSELF BLACK DIAMOND? -- WELL, I'M SERVING NOTICE! I GOT ROOM ON MY GUN FOR JUST ONE MORE NOTCH... AND IT'S RESERVED FOR HIM! AND IT'LL BE BLACK DIAMOND'S LAST FIGHT!

FOR A LONG MOMENT THERE IS A TENSE SILENCE IN THE HIGHBRIDGE SALOON. THE STRANGER FACES THE ASSEMBLED COWBOYS, HIS EYES DARTING A CHALLENGE FOR BLACK DIAMOND TO SHOW HIMSELF. THEN A MASKED MAN SPEAKS, HIS VOICE IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THAT OF THE BRAGGART, CALM, STEADY AND SOFT.

I'M YOUR MAN, LARAMIE! START NOTCHING!



YOU? BLACK DIAMOND? A MILK-DRINKIN' BLONDE HAired, PURTY-FACED CALF? HAW? HAW? NO? BIG BILL LARAMIE FIGHTS MEN, NOT DUDS LIKE YOU!

STAND BACK, BOYS! THE CALF'S GONNA KICK UP ANY SECOND!





DRAW, LARAMEE! I'M FIGHTING YOU WITH THE ONLY WEAPON I NEED FOR A LOUD-MOUTH LIKE YOU!

I'LL FIGHT YUH ANYWAY. YUH NAME?



HEY?? WHA??



SPLUT! *BLAD!* *HEY!* YUH BLINDED ME, YUH LOWDOWN GAYUSE!

THEN YOU CAN'T USE THIS!



YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME, BLACK DIAMOND! I'M TOUGH AND WILD AND I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE LAUGHIN' AT ME! I'LL TEAR YUH APART WITH MY BARE HANDS, I WILL!

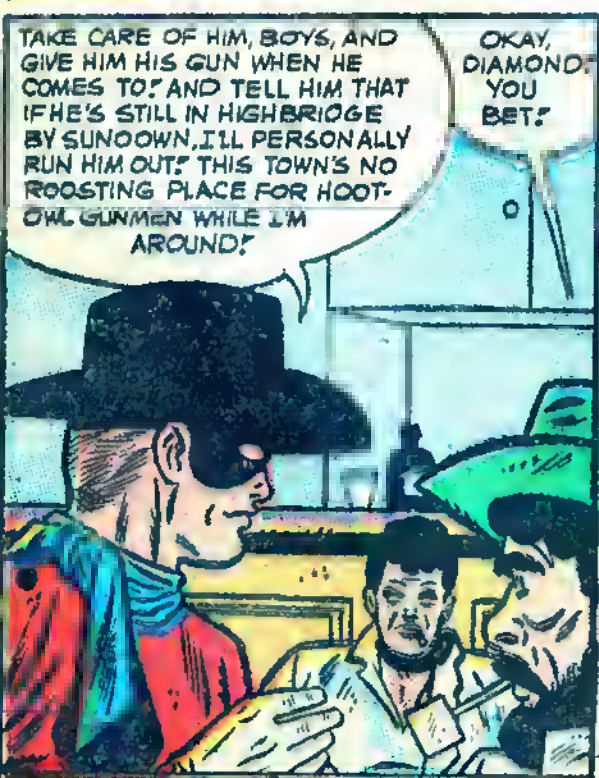
START TEARING, MISTER!

BIG BILL LARAMEE CHARGES LIKE A BULL... AND RUNS STRAIGHT INTO THE UPTURNED TABLE! AND THE BAR-ROOM RINGS WITH THE LAUGHTER OF THE BYSTANDERS!



FEE 5¢

HA! HA! HAA! HO! HEEEEEE!



TAKE CARE OF HIM, BOYS, AND GIVE HIM HIS GUN WHEN HE COMES TO! AND TELL HIM THAT IF HE'S STILL IN HIGHBRIDGE BY SUNDOWN, I'LL PERSONALLY RUN HIM OUT! THIS TOWN'S NO ROOSTING PLACE FOR HOOT-OWL GUNMEN WHILE I'M AROUND!

OKAY, DIAMOND. YOU BET!



THINK HE'LL MOSEY AWAY DIAMOND?

I HOPE SO, BUMPER... HIS SAKE! I DON'T AIM TO BE A LAST NOTCH ON HIS GUN!

AND, BACK AT THE SALOON, A DAZED, ANGRY AND DANGEROUS BIG BILL IS REVIVED... AND WARNED!



DIAMOND WAS ONLY TOYIN' WITH YOU THIS TIME, MISTER! THE NEXT TIME HE WON'T GO SO EASY! YUH BETTER HIGHTAIL IT OUTTA HERE!

I KNOW HOW TO GET HIM! THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY... AND I KNOW IT! BEFORE I'M THROUGH, I'LL HAVE MY LAST NOTCH!

THE LEGEND OF BLACK DIAMOND IS KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE OLD WEST AND THE MOST VIVID PART OF THAT LEGEND IS THE STRONG BOND OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN HIM AND BUMPER THE LOYAL AND GREAT FRIEND WHO WATCHES OVER EVERY MOMENT OF THE MASKEO MAN!!!

THAT SAME LEGEND AND THAT SAME FRIENDSHIP IS KNOWN TOO TO BIG BILL!!! AND HE FOLLOWS THE TRAIL OF THE TWO MEN!!!



DIAMOND THINKS BIG BILL'S GOING TO VAMOOSE, BUT I GOTTA FUNNY FEELING: IT TELLS ME THAT THE GUNMAN MEANS BUSINESS: I'M GONNA MAKE SURE THAT BEFORE BIG BILL GETS TO DIAMOND, HE HAS TO DO IT OVER MY DEAD BODY!



BLACK DIAMOND'S TRICKY: I CAN'T FIGHT HIM FAIR AND SQUARE!!! BUT THERE IS A WAY TO GET THROUGH HIM!!! THAT HUNK OF MUSTACHE CALLED BUMPER!

BUT ALL OF BUMPER'S ALERTNESS IS NOT ENOUGH TO HALT THE STEALTHY PROGRESS OF THE ANGERED GUNMAN!

MINUTES LATER, BLACK DIAMOND JUMPS TO WAKEFULNESS AS THE SAME VOICE, NOW RAISED IN TRIUMPH CALLS OUT!



MAKE JUST ONE NOISE, BUMPER, AND IT'LL BE YOUR LAST: NOW JUST GET UP REAL QUIET-LIKE AND GET IN FRONT OF ME!



BLACK DIAMOND: YUH HEAR ME, YUH ORNERY CUSS? DROP YORE GUNS AND COME OUT OR I CLIP THIS MUSTACHE IN TWO!

LARAMEE? AND HE'S GOT BUMPER!



WHAT'S THE MATTER, LARAMEE? WHY DIDN'T YOU SHOOT ME WHILE I WAS ASLEEP?

'CAUSE I DONT TRUST YUH EVEN ASLEEP WHEN YUH WEAR YUH GUNS: NOW DROP 'EM OR!!!



DON'T DO IT, DIAMOND: DON'T PAY HIM NO MIND: HE'S GONNA FINISH ME ANYWAY!!! SO DON'T GIVE YOURSELF UP TOO!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, PARTNER: I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!



HA-HA-HA: GO AHEAD LARAMEE: SHOOT: ADD THAT LAST NOTCH TO YOUR GUN: HA-HA-HA: WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!

DON'T! DON'T LAUGH AT ME: WHAT'RE YUN LAUGHIN' AT ME FOR? WHATCHA GOT UP YORE SLEEVE?

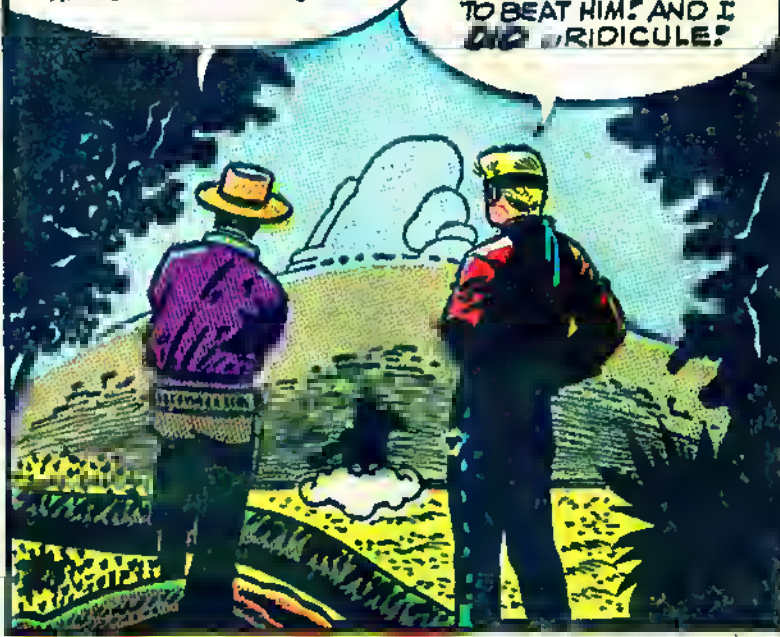
ANGER, BLIND, FURIOUS FEAR, THROWS THE OUTLAW OFF STRIDE! HE WONDERS WHAT SECRET BLACK DIAMOND HAS THAT CAUSES THIS LAUGHTER... AND IS AFRAID TO SHOOT FOR FEAR OF SOMETHING HAPPENING WHEN HE DOES...



STAND BACK! DON'T MOVE! LEMME ALONE! DON'T COME NEAR ME! LEMME OUTTA HERE BEFORE YUH DO SOMETHING!

WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE! WHAT WAS THE IDEA, DIAMOND? WHY'D YUH TAKE SUCH A CHANCE... AND WHAT WERE YOU LAUGHIN' AT?

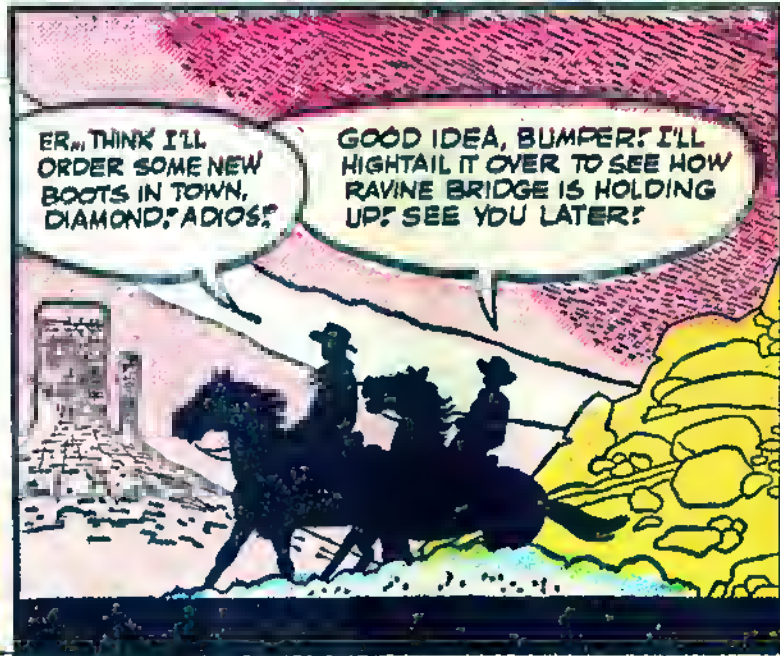
AT HIM! I REMEMBER HE DIDN'T LIKE BEING LAUGHED AT! AND HE RECKONED I HAD SOMETHING PLANNED TO BEAT HIM! AND I DID... RIDICULE!



THANKS, PARD. YUH SAVED MY LIFE AS WELL AS YOURS. STILL, HE'S NOT BOUND TO FORGET THIS! HE WON'T REST 'TILL HE ADDS THE LAST NOTCH TO HIS GUN!

YOU WERE WILLING TO SACRIFICE YOUR LIFE FOR MINE, BUMPER, SO I COULDN'T DO ANY LESS FOR YOU! MEANWHILE IF BIG BILL TRIES SOMETHING ELSE, WE'LL BE READY FOR HIM!

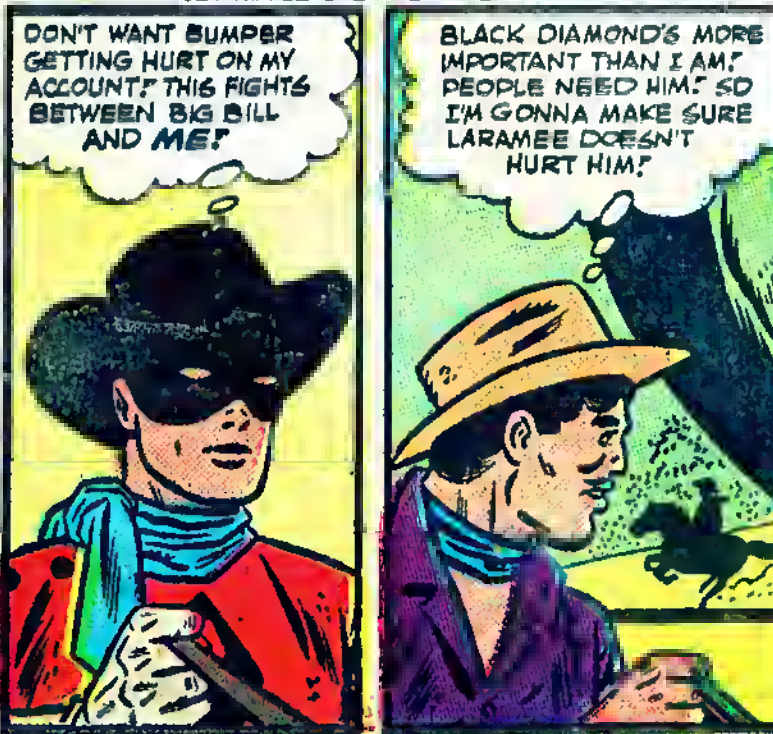
BUT THERE IS NO LONGER REST FOR EITHER MAN! ALTHOUGH SILENT, BOTH MEN KNOW THE DANGER THAT STALKS THEM. AND THEN, TO THROW EACH OTHER OFF, EACH MAN THINKS OF A WAY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM!



ER... THINK I'LL ORDER SOME NEW BOOTS IN TOWN, DIAMOND. ADIOS!

GOOD IDEA, BUMPER! I'LL HIGHTAIL IT OVER TO SEE HOW RAVINE BRIDGE IS HOLDING UP! SEE YOU LATER!

BUT EACH MAN IS LOOKING FOR BIG BILL... EACH ONE WANTING TO GET HIM BEFORE THE OTHER...



DON'T WANT BUMPER GETTING HURT ON MY ACCOUNT! THIS FIGHTS BETWEEN BIG BILL AND ME!

BLACK DIAMOND'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN I AM! PEOPLE NEED HIM! SO I'M GONNA MAKE SURE LARAMEE DOESN'T HURT HIM!

AND AT ECHO RAVINE, ON A CLIFF HIGH ABOVE THE VALLEY, BIG BILL LARAMEE, HIS HEART BENT ON REVENGE FOR THE LAUGHTER AND RIDICULE, PERCHES LIKE A BIRD OF PREY, WAITING... WAITING...



BLACK DIAMOND ALWAYS STOPS BY THIS BRIDGE TO CHECK IT! HE'S GOT TO COME BY SOMEDAY! AND WHEN HE DOES, I CAN SEE HIM COME FOR MILES... AND IT'LL BE HIS LAST VISIT!

SUCH ARE THE WAYS OF ENEMIES, AND SUCH IS THE LUCK OF BIG BILL LARAMEE...

**GREAT HORN TOADS? I
GUESSED IT? HE IS
HEADIN' HERE?**

BUT SUCH TOO ARE THE WAYS
OF LOYAL FRIENDS THAT THEY
WILL FOLLOW CLOSE ON YOUR
TRAIL AND KEEP AN EYE ON
YOU, NO MATTER WHERE YOU
MAY LEAD...

HATED TO LIE TO DIAMOND
LIKE THAT, BUT...**"JUMPIN'
SASSAFRASS?"** WHAT'S
THAT?

IT'S THE MEREST THING... A SLIGHT THING...
ONLY THE MOMENTARY GLINT OF THE SUN'S
RAYS ON A GUN BARREL... BUT BUMPER
SEES IT!

AND THERE'S DIAMOND... HEADING
RIGHT INTO BIG BILL'S LINE OF FIRE:
HOW'M I GONNA STOP THIS? WHAT
WOULD MY PARTNER DO IN A CASE
LIKE THIS? C'MON, BUMPER. IF YUH
GOT ANY BRAINS, USE 'EM NOW."

AND HE REMEMBERS WHAT BLACK DIAMOND SAID- THAT BIG BILL, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, HATES RIDICULE AND LAUGHTER... AND HE REMEMBERS SOMETHING ELSE... THAT ECHO RAVINE IS A GREAT ECHO CHAMBER IN WHICH EVERY SOUND IS MAGNIFIED AND RE-ECHOED A THOUSAND TIMES AND SO HE SHOUTS OUT HIS LAUGHTER...

THE LAUGHTER BOUNDS FROM CLIFF-WALL TO CLIFF WALL,
EXPLODING IN BIG BILL'S EARS LIKE CANNON SHOT!

HAA! HA! HO-HO! HAA! HA!

HA! HAA--HAA! HA! HA! HA!

AND BLACK DIAMOND, TOO, HEARS THE SOUNDS AND REALIZES WHAT IS GOING! THEN HE JOINS IN.

IT'S...IT'S ALL AROUND ME!
I'M SURROUNDED!
THEY'RE COMIN' AFTER
ME! LEMME OUTTA
HERE!

AND THE ONLY WAY OUT IS ACROSS THE
TREACHEROUS, WEAK AND PERILOUS BRIDGE!

THEY'RE NOT GONNA GET ME!
THEY WANNA LAUGH ME TO DEATH!
BUT THEY'RE NOT GONNA DO IT!

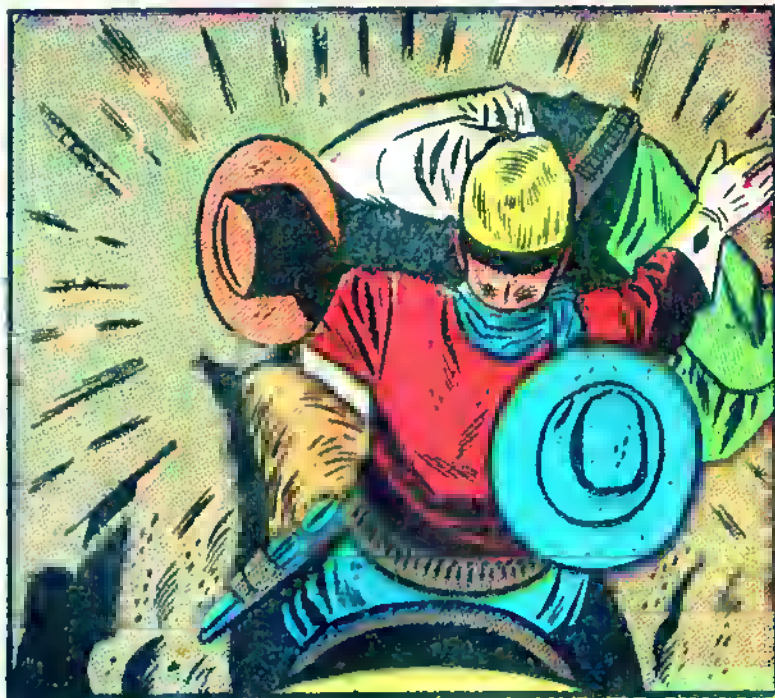
HA! HA! HAA! HA! HA!

HA! HA! HA! HA!

BUT THE OLD BRIDGE CREAKS AND STRAINS UNDER THE SUDDEN PRESSURE! THEN... A ROPE BREAKS... AND THERE IS NOTHING UNDER BIG BILL BUT HUNDREDS OF FEET OF SPACE!



THE HORSE'S HOOF'S SPRAY DUST AND FLASH SPARKS AS IT CHARGES AHEAD... AND THEN BLACK DIAMOND BRACES HIMSELF TO TAKE THE SHOCK OF THE HURLING BODY!



THE LAUGH? WHERE'S ALL THE LAUGH?

TAKE IT EASY, BIG BILL! NO-BODY'S LAUGHING AT YOU NOW! YOU CAME MIGHTY CLOSE TO BEING FINISHED, THOUGH!

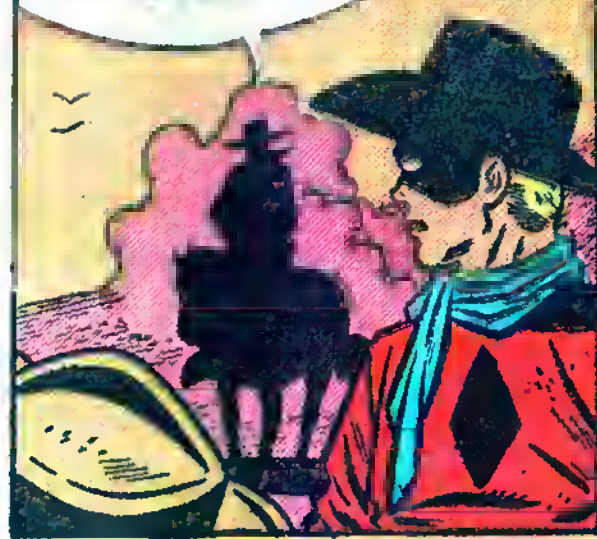


I KNOW, BLACK DIAMOND... AND WHEN I WAS FALLING I REALIZED WHAT A BIG OAF I WAS JUST SHOWING OFF AND THINKIN' I HAD TO SHOW I WAS TOUGHER'N YOU... AND YUH RISKED YORE LIFE TO SAVE MINE! NO MAN'S TOUGHER'N THAT, DIAMOND!



AND AS FOR THAT LAST NOTCH IN MY GUN, I'M SAVIN' IT FOR THE HOMBRE THAT TRIES TO DO YOU IN! I LEARNED MY LESSON, PARDNER! FROM NOW ON IT'S THE STRAIGHT AN' NARROW! ADIOS!

ADIOS, BIG BILL, AND GOOD LUCK!

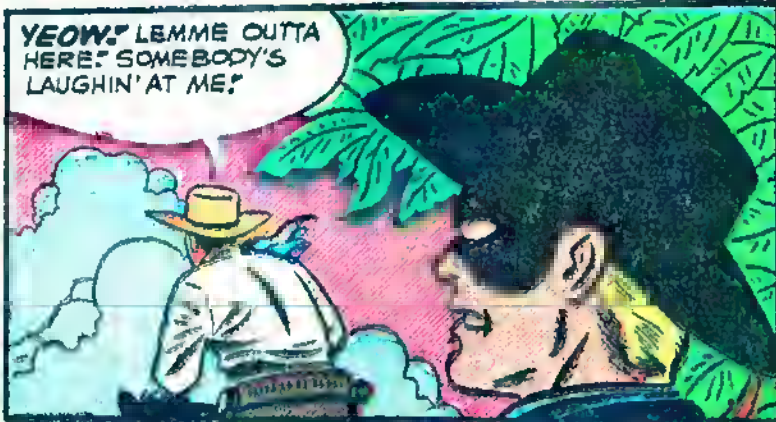


AND YOU BUMPER! I THOUGHT YOU WERE HEADING FOR TOWN!

SORRY I HADDA FIB LIKE THAT! JEST DIDN'T WANT YUH GETTIN' HURT, DIAMOND! WHOM I GONNA TEACH ALL THE SMART WAYS TO OUTSMART A BAD HOMBRE IF YOU'RE NOT AROUND?



YEOW! LEMME OUTTA HERE! SOMEBODY'S LAUGHIN' AT ME!



HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!



THE END (6)

THE MYSTERIOUS ACTIVITY GOING ON IN THE REMOTE BADLANDS NORTH OF CARSON CITY AROUSES A HOST OF FEARFUL AND FRIGHTENING RUMORS! EVERYONE IN TOWN ADVISES BLACK DIAMOND TO STAY CLEAR OF THE PICTURESQUE BUT WEIRDLY EVIL TERRAIN! BUT THE STRANGE TALES ONLY SERVE TO WHET THE CURIOSITY OF THE FEARLESS WESTERN MARSHAL WHO PROMPTLY RIDES STRAIGHT INTO THE FORBIDDEN TERRITORY TO APPREHEND...

The BADMAN of PAINTED VALLEY!



IN ITS EARLY DAYS, PAINTED VALLEY, UTAH SEES THE RISE OF A BAND OF OUTLAWS LED BY A BLACK-HEARTED GAMBLER KNOWN AS...BIG TAD MASON!

THERE'S PAINTED VALLEY, DIAMOND!

...THE TOUGHEST TOWN NORTH OF CARSON CITY! AND A GOOD HIDEOUT FOR MASON!



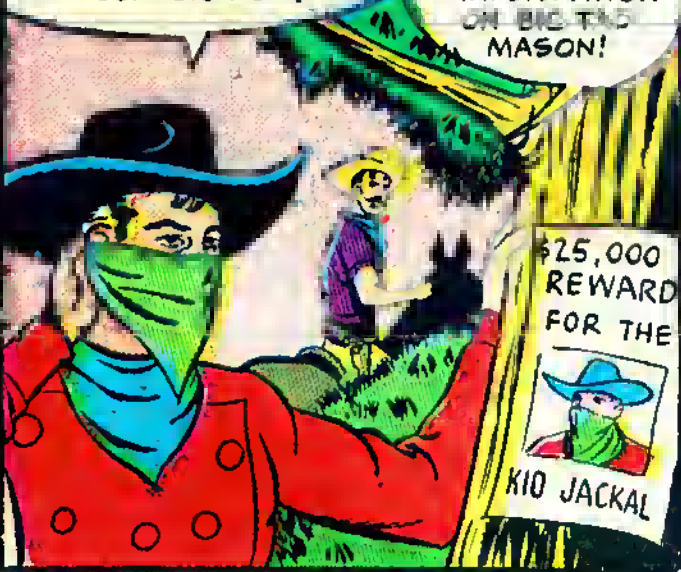
HOW ARE WE GOING TO CATCH THIS HOMBRE? IF YOU RIDE INTO TOWN AS BLACK DIAMOND... THE WHOLE GANG WILL BE OUT GUNNING FOR YOU!

NOT QUITE AS BLACK DIAMOND! WATCH, BUMPER... I'LL SHOW YOU!



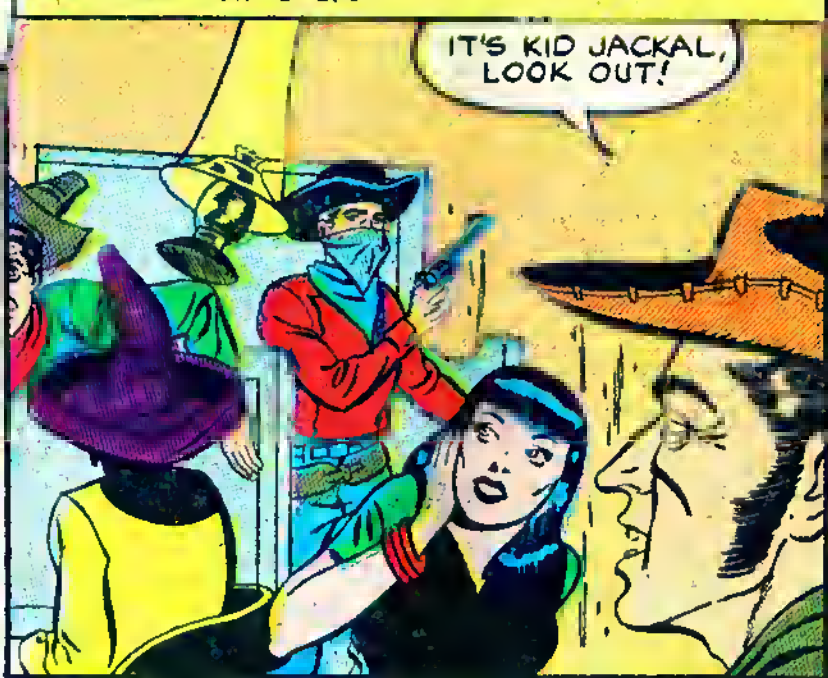
IT TAKES A TOUGH OWLHOOT TO CATCH AN EVEN TOUGHER OWLHOOT! SO I'LL AMBLE INTO TOWN AS KID JACKAL... WHO'S ACTUALLY SOUTH OF THE BORDER NOW!

RIGHT! AND I'LL SCOUT AROUND FOR SOME WORK! MAYBE I CAN DIG UP SOME INFORMATION ON BIG TAD MASON!

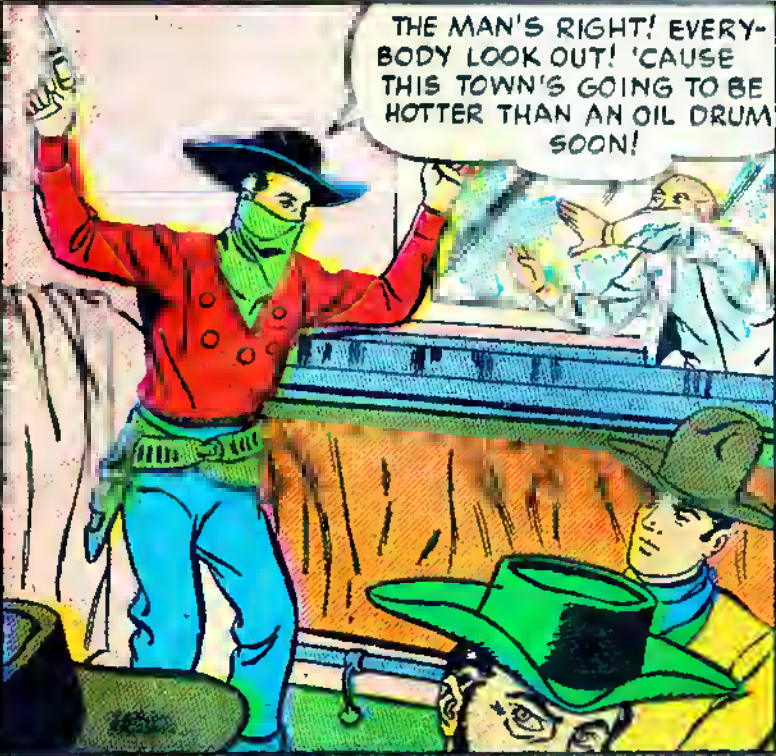


MUCH LATER, THE DOORS OF THE GOLDEN DOLLAR SALOON SWING OPEN...

IT'S KID JACKAL, LOOK OUT!



THE MAN'S RIGHT! EVERYBODY LOOK OUT! 'CAUSE THIS TOWN'S GOING TO BE HOTTER THAN AN OIL DRUM SOON!



A SHOT! SURE, KID! COMIN' UP, PRONTO!

IF I CAN BEAT KID JACKAL TO THE DRAW... THE \$25,000 REWARD IS MINE!



DIAMOND SEES A FAINT MOVEMENT BEHIND HIM! WITH LIGHTNING-LIKE SPEED, HE UNLEASHES A FURIOUS BARRAGE OF FIRE...

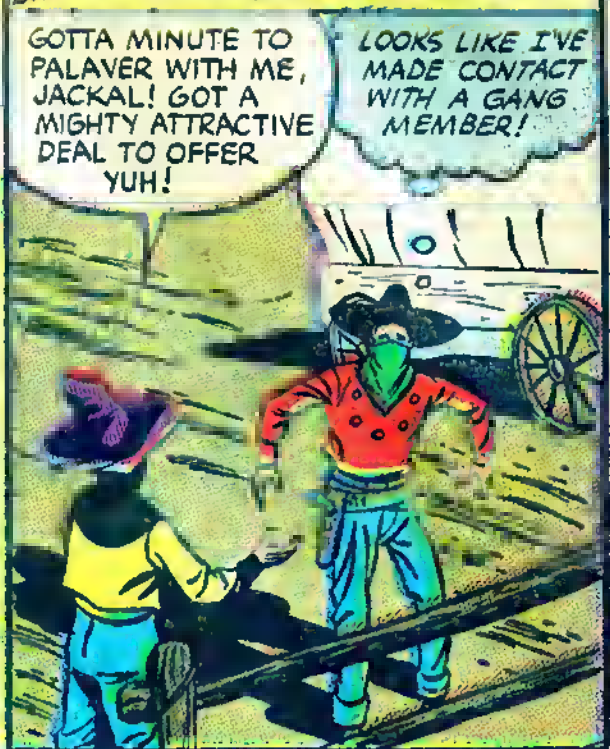
TRY DRYGULCHING ME AGAIN...AND I'LL DROP YOU!



MOMENTS LATER, OUTSIDE THE SALOON...

GOTTA MINUTE TO PALAVER WITH ME, JACKAL! GOT A MIGHTY ATTRACTIVE DEAL TO OFFER YUH!

LOOKS LIKE I'VE MADE CONTACT WITH A GANG MEMBER!



I TOLD BIG TAD 'BOUT THE WAY YOU WORK! HE THINKS YUH MIGHT BE JUST THE HOMBRE HE'S LOOKIN' FOR!

TELL BIG TAD HE'S GOT HIMSELF A BOY!



SOON AFTER...THE DISGUISED MARSHAL ENTERS THE BARN WHERE BUMPER HAS A JOB AS BLACKSMITH...

DIAMOND! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME! THEY MIGHT BE WATCHING YOU!



I'VE JUST BEEN GIVEN A PERSONAL INVITE TO JOIN THE GANG BY ONE OF MASON'S OWLHOOTS! YOU STAY ON HERE TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME, OR THEY MIGHT GET SUSPICIOUS, WWWW

SURE! BETTER DISAPPEAR... SOMEONE'S COMING!



WHAT'S GOING ON? I HEARD VOICES!

JUST ME TALKING TO MYSELF! GETS KINDA LONELY IN HERE!



THAT SAME DAY... IN A MAKESHIFT HIDEOUT, DIAMOND MEETS BIG TAD...

GET THIS STRAIGHT, JACKAL! I'M HEAD MAN IN THESE PARTS AND I DON'T TOLERATE WISE MAVERICKS TRYING TO HORN IN ON ME!

IF YOU'RE REALLY BOSS AROUND HERE, WHY SO WORRIED?



WHY, YUH SADDLE TRAMP! I OUGHTTA PLUG YUH FOR THAT...BUT I'LL GIVE YUH A BREAK! IF YUH CAN PULL THE ACE OF SPADES OUTTA THIS DECK...YUH GOT A JOB! IF YUH DON'T...YOU'RE A GONNER!

THAT'S MIGHTY SPORTSMAN LIKE OF YOU!



MASON'S CARD TRICKS ARE INFAMOUS, AND DIAMOND SUSPECTS A STACKED DECK, SO HE CAME PREPARED. QUICKLY, HE DRAWS A CARD, BUT SWITCHES IT WITH ONE HE PALMS...

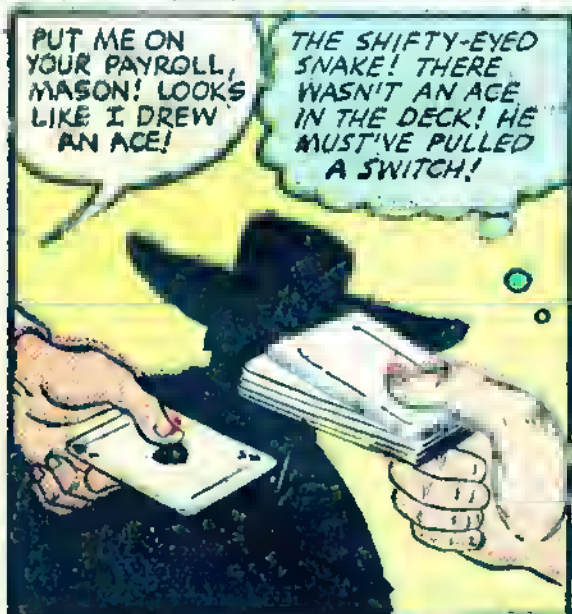
CAN'T LET ON I USE A STACKED DECK, SO I'LL LET HIM GET AWAY THIS TIME...

DIAMOND LEARNS PLENTY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS ABOUT THE STRANGE SET-UP! HE TAKES EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO RUIN THEIR PLANS...

PUT ME ON YOUR PAYROLL, MASON! LOOKS LIKE I DREW AN ACE!

THE SHIFTY-EYED SNAKE! THERE WASN'T AN ACE IN THE DECK! HE MUST'VE PULLED A SWITCH!

YUH'RE HIRED! GET READY TO RIDE!

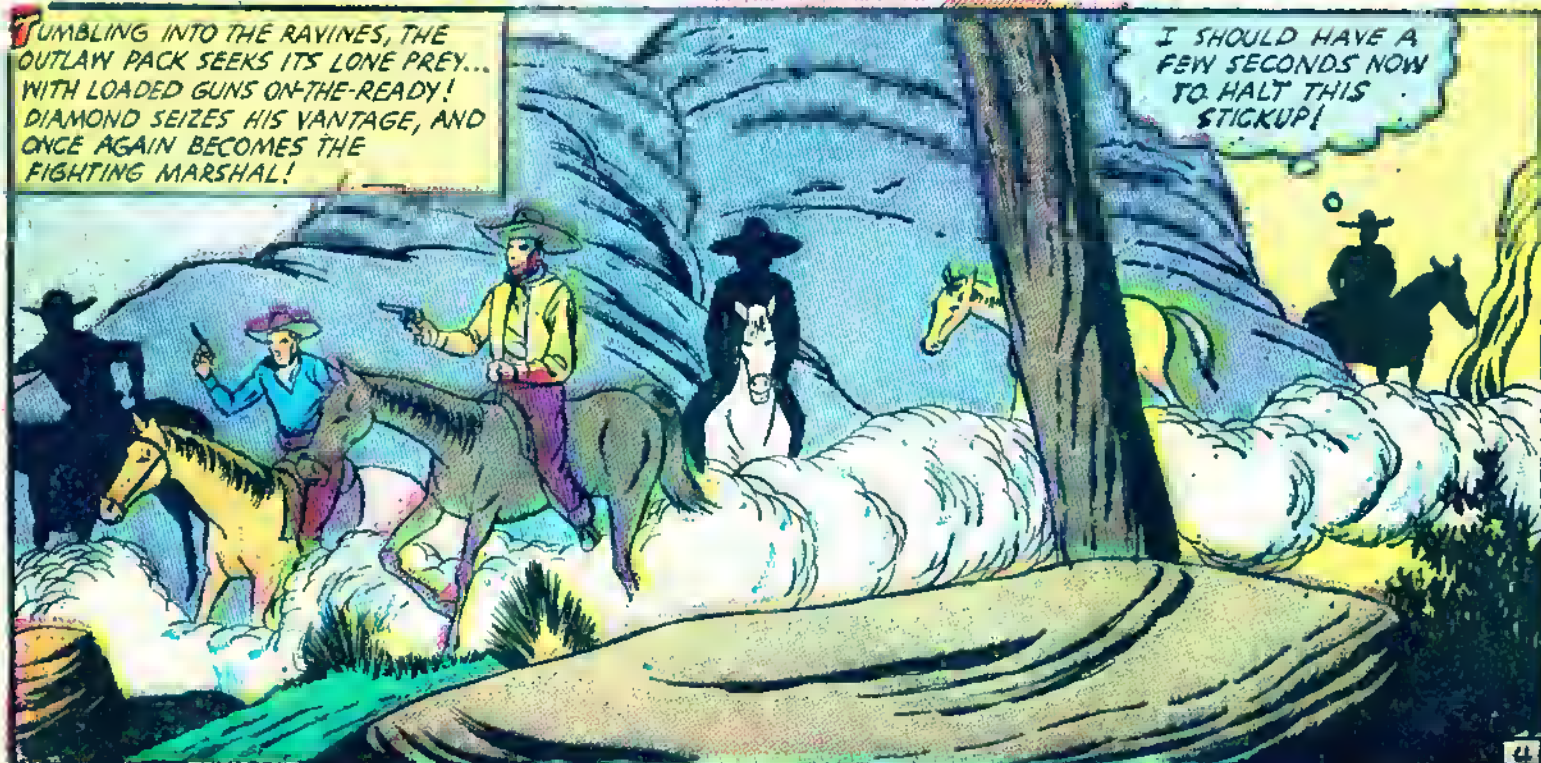


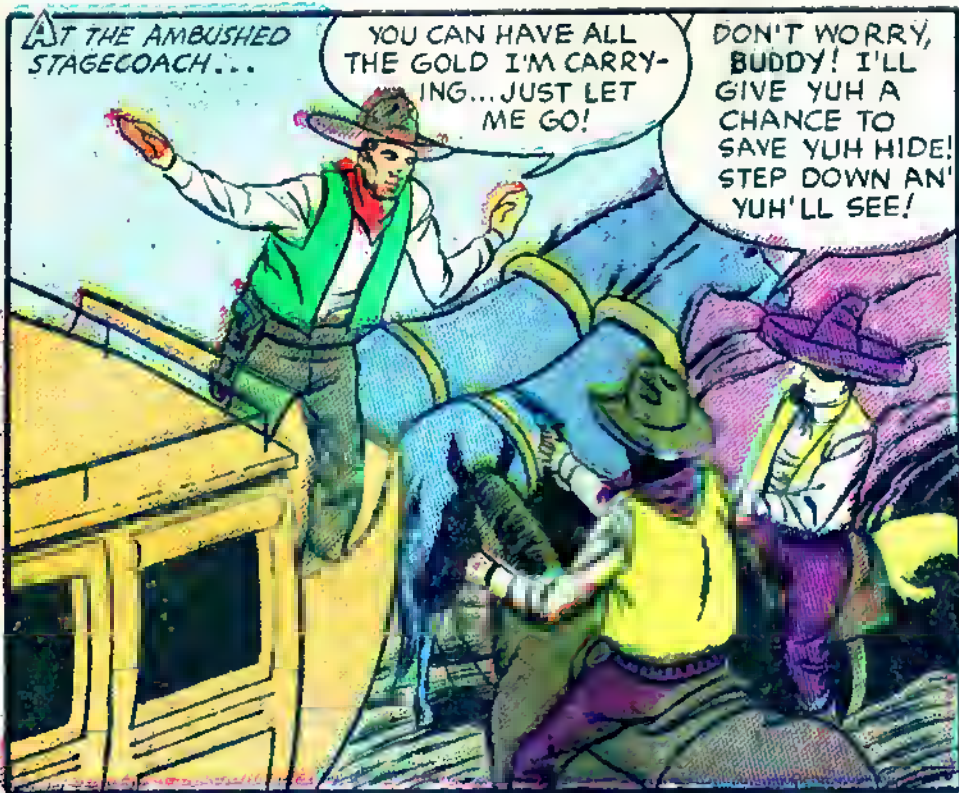
ME AND FRANK'LL HIT THE STAGE-COACH WHILE THE REST OF YUH STAND GUARD! GIT!



TUMBLING INTO THE RAVINES, THE OUTLAW PACK SEEKS ITS LONE PREY... WITH LOADED GUNS ON-THE-READY! DIAMOND SEIZES HIS VANTAGE, AND ONCE AGAIN BECOMES THE FIGHTING MARSHAL!

I SHOULD HAVE A FEW SECONDS NOW TO HALT THIS STICKUP!





AT THE AMBUSHED STAGECOACH...

YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE GOLD I'M CARRYING... JUST LET ME GO!

DON'T WORRY, BUDDY! I'LL GIVE YUH A CHANCE TO SAVE YUH HIDE! STEP DOWN AN' YUH'LL SEE!

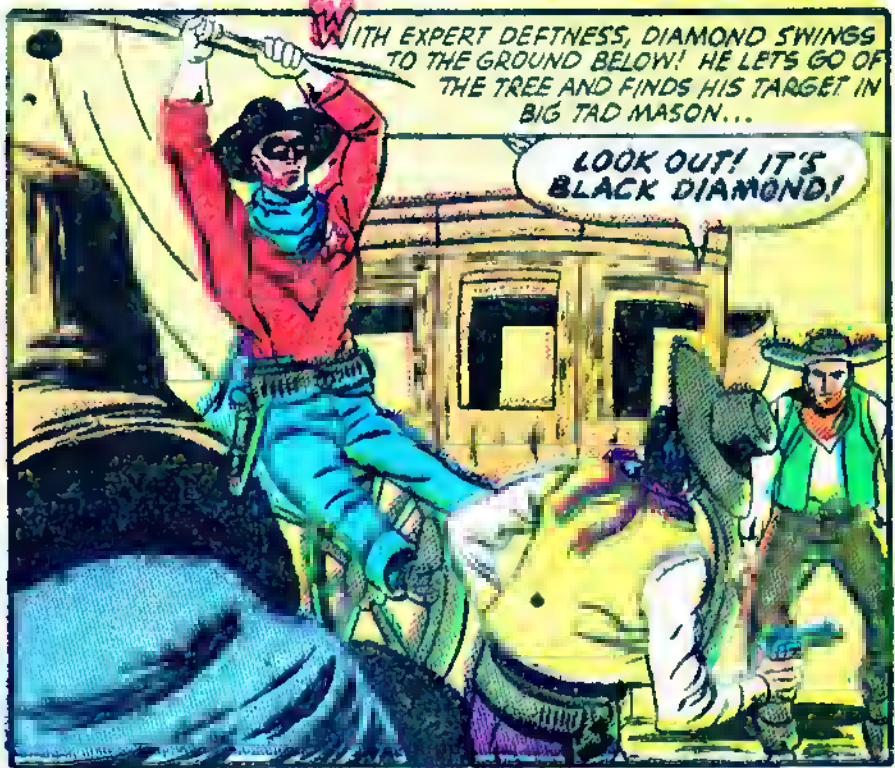


WE'LL WALK OFF SIX PACES AN' THEN SHOOT IT OUT! IF YUH WIN, WE'LL LET YORE GOLD ALONE! ONLY I'VE NEVER KNOWN TO MISS!



MEANWHILE, DIAMOND REACHES THE SUMMIT OF PAINTED VALLEY! SUDDENLY, HE SPRINGS INTO ACTION AND...

I'D BETTER STOP THIS GUNPLAY BEFORE MASON HURTS THAT DRIVER!



WITH EXPERT DEFTNESS, DIAMOND SWINGS TO THE GROUND BELOW! HE LETS GO OF THE TREE AND FINDS HIS TARGET IN BIG TAD MASON...

LOOK OUT! IT'S BLACK DIAMOND!



WE'RE WASTIN' LEAD! THEY'RE OUT OF REACH!

NEVER BE A SITTING DUCK AGAIN FOR BIG TAD MASON...OR YOU'LL BE A DEAD DUCK! HE NEVER LOSES A GUN BATTLE...AND I KNOW WHY!



AFTER SEEING THE STAGECOACH SAFELY BACK TO TOWN, DIAMOND RACES TO THE HIDEOUT...

WHERE IN BLAZES WERE YUH, JACKAL...WHILE WE WERE BEING SHOT AT?

WHO, ME? I WAS ON THE RIDGE KEEPING A LOOKOUT FOR THE SHERIFF!

BACK IN THE BLACKSMITH SHOP, BUMPER SEARCHES FOR CLUES, UNAWARE THAT HE IS BEING WATCHED BY SUSPICIOUS EYES...

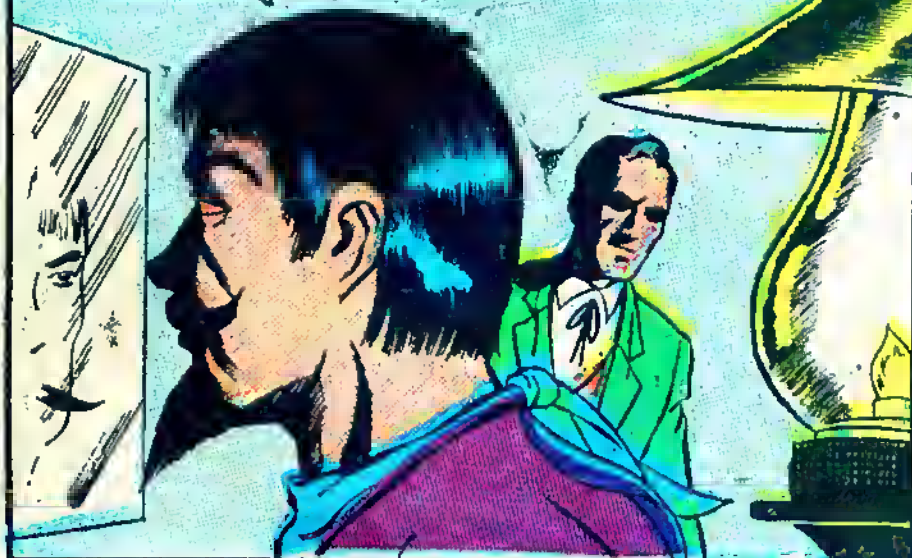


HEY... WHAT'S THIS? A BEARD AND WIG...

DIAMOND SURE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO SEE ME IN THIS GETUP! I BET I LOOK JUST LIKE MASON!



YESSIRREEBOB! I'M THE SPITTIN' IMAGE OF BIG TAD! THE WIG... THE BEARD! AND STACEY IS ABOUT BIG TAD'S SIZE! I'M BEGINNING TO THINK STACEY AND MASON ARE THE SAME MAN!



GOT TO GET THIS NOTE TO DIAMOND AND WARN HIM!



SUDDENLY... WITHOUT A WARNING SOUND...

REACH... BUMPER! DON'T MAKE A SOUND AND YUH WON'T GET HURT!

OKAY, THIS TIME YOU HAVE THE DROP ON ME!



AFTER TYING BUMPER, ON GOES STACEY'S WIG AND BEARD CHANGING HIM INTO BIG TAD MASON...

SO KID JACKAL'S REALLY BLACK DIAMOND? AN' HE WANTS TO BRING ME IN! WHAT A SURPRISE THAT TIN BADGE MARSHAL HAS COMIN' TO HIM!



SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, BACK AT THE HIDEOUT...

WE'RE PULLIN' A BIG JOB TONIGHT, JACKAL... AND YUH HEAD GUN! THERE'S THIS TOP-GRADE GOLD ORE WE WANTA SMUGGLE OUT OF TOWN FOR UNDERGROUND SALE! THE SHERIFF'S ALREADY BEEN CALLED AWAY ON A FALSE ALARM, AND...



...YUH, KID CAN GO IN WHEN IT'S DARK AN' STICK UP THE ASSAYERS' OFFICE!

SURE, BIG TAD! TONIGHT... THE ASSAYERS OFFICE!



THAT NIGHT, AT THE BLACKSMITH SHOP... MASON AND HIS GANG PREPARE AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE FOR DIAMOND...

BLACK DIAMOND POSING AS KID JACKAL HAS TO RIDE PAST HERE! WE'LL LET HIM GET THE GOLD FIRST, AND THEN...



...WE'LL GIVE HIM WHAT HE DESERVES, SNATCH THE GOLD AND VAMOOSE OUT OF THE STATE!

JUMPING JUPITER! THEY'LL DRY-GULCH DIAMOND! THIS BROKEN WHEEL GIVES ME AN IDEA!



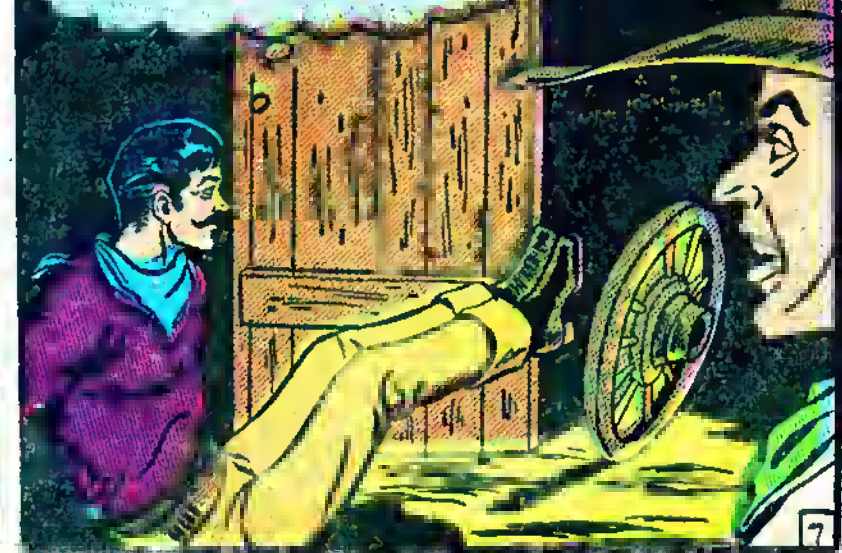
AS THE WESTERN ACE UNKNOWINGLY DRAWS CLOSE TO THE TRAP, HIS CAUTION AND ALERTNESS NEVER SLACKEN...

AFTER I FAKE THE ROBBERY, MAYBE I CAN STUFF ROCKS IN THE SACK AND FOOL MASON UNTIL HE TAKES ME TO HIS OTHER LOOT!

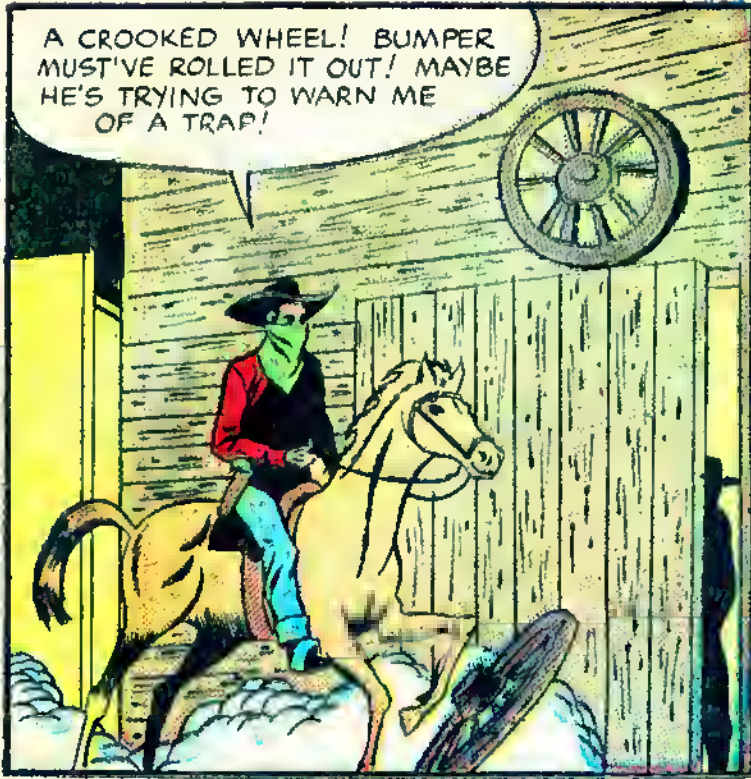


INSIDE THE BARN, BUMPER FRANTICALLY KICKS HIS LEGS, AN INCREDIBLE THRUST FINDS ITS TARGET...AND A MOMENT LATER THE WHEEL PLUNGES TOWARD THE DOOR...

DIAMOND MUST BE OUTSIDE NOW... SO HERE GOES! I SURE HOPE HE GETS THE TIPOFF!



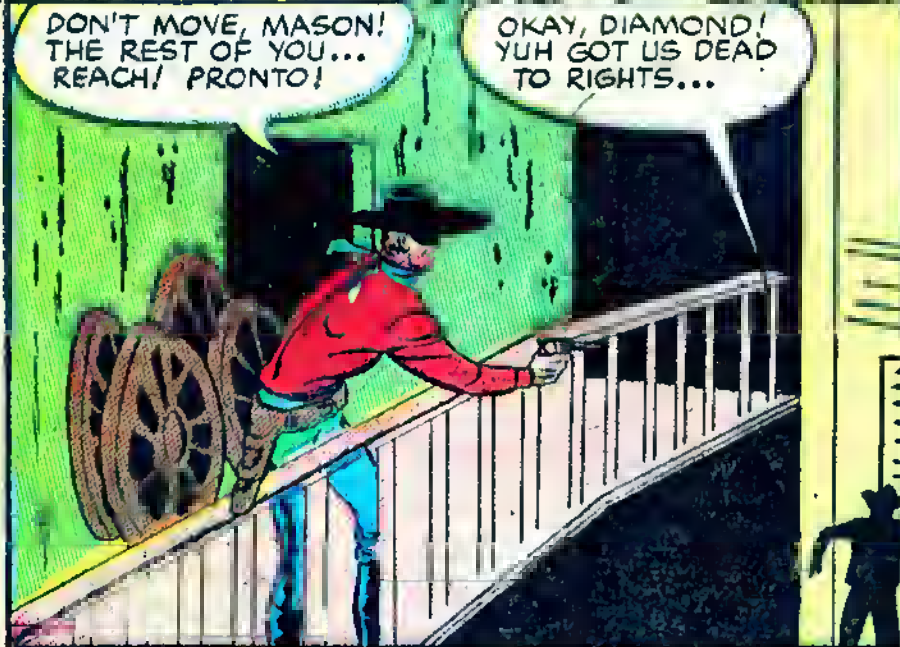
A CROOKED WHEEL! BUMPER MUST'VE ROLLED IT OUT! MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO WARN ME OF A TRAP!



DIAMOND PAUSES OUTSIDE THE DOOR, SUDDENLY HIS HANDS SHOOT SKYWARD AND HE NIMBLY GRASPS THE BALCONY RAILING! WITH ONE SWIFT TWIST OF HIS SINEWY BODY, HE PULLS HIMSELF UP JUST IN TIME TO GET OUT OF THE RANGE OF GUNFIRE...



SPEEDILY, DIAMOND DROPS HIS DISGUISE AND TURNS THE TABLES ON THE GANG BEFORE THEY REALIZE THEIR PLAN HAS BACK-FIRED...



CAN THIS BE POSSIBLE...? DIAMOND SHOOTING A MAN RAISING HIS HANDS IN SURRENDER...



SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU CLEAN-LIVING MAVERICKS, BUT I'VE NEVER IN MY LIFE SHOT A MAN WHO SURRENDERED! I JUST HIT THAT TRICK PISTOL HE HIDES UNDER HIS CLOTHES! WHEN HE RAISES HIS ARM, IT FIRES!

NO WONDER MASON HAS A REPUTATION FOR A FAST DRAW! THE SIDEWINDER CAN GUN A MAN JUST BY RAISING HIS ARM!



LATER, WITH THE GANG SAFELY DELIVERED TO THE SHERIFF...

DIAMOND, CLOSING THIS CASE GIVES ME MORE SATISFACTION THAN ALL THE REST PUT TOGETHER!

HA, HA! COULD THE REASON BE THAT YOU WEREN'T CUT OUT TO BE A BLACKSMITH?



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STURDILY BUILT OF DU PONT DURABLE PLASTIC

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400 Madison Ave., New York 17, N. Y.

Send your newly created, colorful, complete giant Davy Crockett playhouse tent at once. It is understood if I am not delighted after 10 day trial I will return for full refund of the purchase price.

☐ I enclose \$1.00 plus 25c for postage, for each giant Davy Crockett playhouse tent ordered.

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ADDRESS.....

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Shows
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